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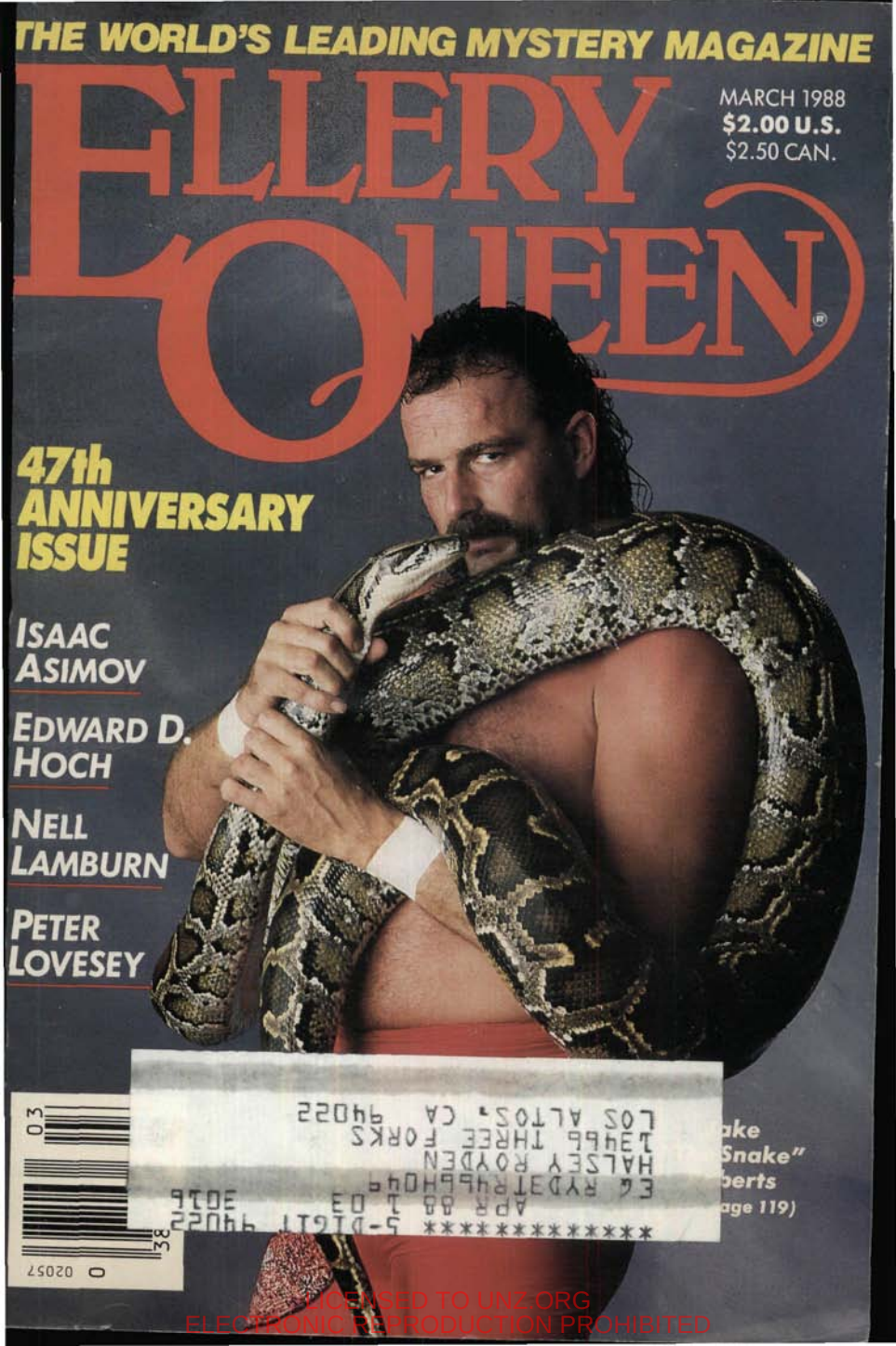

47th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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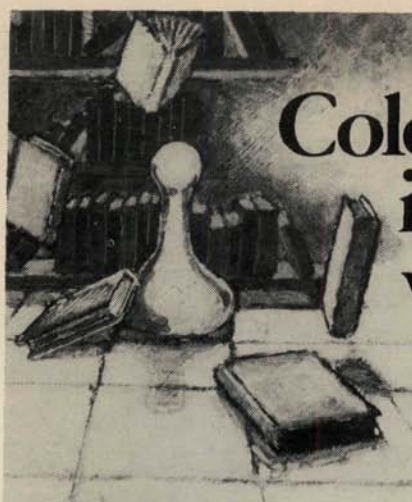

Colonel Custard, in the study, with a book.

Colonel Custard did it to himself. By accident, he joined the wrong book club. After that, the books kept coming and coming. Books that had nothing to do with mystery. Books he didn't want. And books he had never ordered. With his apartment crammed full of books, Custard was forced to move to a larger place. But the book club tracked him down and kept sending him more! The really sad thing is that he could have avoided all of this...if he had only known about the Mystery Guild!

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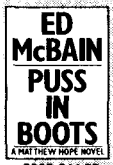

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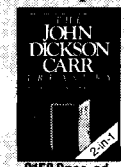

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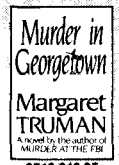

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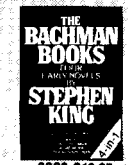

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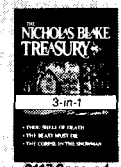

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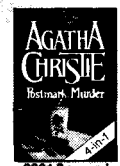

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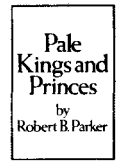

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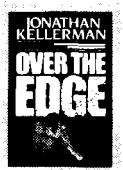

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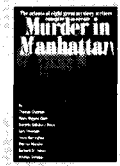

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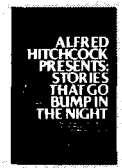

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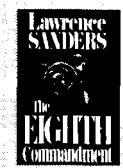

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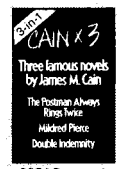

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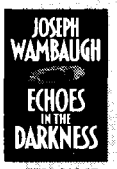

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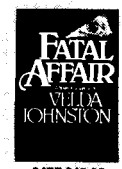

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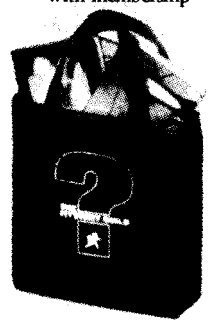

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a *NEW* Black Widowers story by

ISAAC ASIMOV

"It's become an obsession with me," Theodore Jarvik told the Widowers. "I happen to know that passage of 'The Lost Chord' and I suppose I began to hear it go through my head with appropriate changes in words— 'I have sought, but I seek it vainly, that one lost place divine, from which came the spirit of silence that entered into me . . .' "

THE QUIET PLACE

by ISAAC ASIMOV

Emmanuel Rubin, who was host of the Black Widowers banquet that evening, had been at his loudest and most quarrelsome.

He had insisted on the unimportance of algebra to Roger Halsted who taught the subject in a junior high school, denounced the patent system to Geoffrey Avalon who was a patent lawyer, denied the validity of quantum theory in connection with molecular structure to chemist James Drake, pointed out the uselessness of espionage in modern warfare to cipher expert Thomas Trumbull, and placed the cherry on the sundae by watching Mario Gonzalo as, with consummate ease and skill, he drew a cartoon of that evening's guest and telling him he knew nothing at all about caricature.

Trumbull, who of all the Black Widowers was least likely to be amused by Rubin in his wilder moments, finally said, "What the devil is wrong with you, Manny? We're used to having you wrong at the top of your voice and taking on one or another of us with some indefensible point of view, but this time you're tackling us all."

It was Rubin's guest who answered Trumbull in a quiet voice and, at that, it was almost the first time he had spoken that evening. He was a young man, not far gone into his thirties, it would appear,

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with thin blond hair, light-blue eyes, a face that was wide across the cheekbones, and a smile that seemed to come easily and yet had something sad about it. His name was Theodore Jarvik.

"I'm afraid, gentlemen, the fault is mine, if it is a fault to follow professional procedure. I have recently become Manny's editor and I was forced to hand back his latest manuscript with requests for revision."

"For eviscerative revision," muttered Rubin.

"I did offer to cancel out the invitation for this evening," said Jarvik, with his sad smile, "on the supposition that Manny would just as soon not look at me right now."

Gonzalo raised his eyebrows and said, "Manny doesn't mind this sort of thing. We've all heard him say about a thousand times that the true professional writer takes revisions and even rejections in stride. He says that one way you can tell an amateur or a beginner is by noting that he considers his every word sac—"

"Oh, shut up, Mario," said Rubin, clearly chafing. "You don't know the details."

"Actually," said Jarvik, "Manny and I will work it out."

Avalon, from his seventy-four inches of height, said in his grave baritone, "I'm curious, Manny—have you called Mr. Jarvik a 'young punk' yet?"

"Oh, for God's sake," said Rubin, reddening.

"No, he hasn't, Mr. Avalon," said Jarvik, "but he's *thought* it very loudly."

"That is *not true!*" shouted Rubin at the top of his considerable decibel-rating.

"Let's wash out this night," said Drake in resignation. "You're going to be in such a foul humor, Manny, that—"

"When have I *ever* been in a foul—" began Rubin and then Henry, the pearl-beyond-price of waiters, interrupted.

"Gentlemen, please be seated," he said. "Dinner is served."

To do Rubin justice, he did his best to control himself during the dinner. His eyes, behind his thick glasses, flashed, his sparse beard bristled, and he snarled unceasingly, but he managed to say little and leave the conversation to the others.

Gonzalo, who sat next to Jarvik, said to him, "Pardon me, but you keep humming."

Jarvik flushed again, something his fair skin made easy. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you."

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"It doesn't exactly disturb me. It's just that I don't recognize the tune."

"I don't know. I'm just improvising, I suppose."

"Is that so?" Gonzalo was quiet for the remainder of the dinner, until the rattle of spoon on glass marked the beginning of the questioning of the guest. Then he said, "May I volunteer to do the grilling?"

"You can for all of me," growled Rubin, who, as host, had the task of appointing the griller. "Just don't ask him to justify his existence. The editor doesn't live who can do that."

"On the contrary," said Gonzalo, "any editor who has handed back a manuscript of yours has already justified his existence a hundred times over."

Halsted said, "May I suggest we go ahead with grilling our guest and not needling each other?"

Gonzalo brushed some imaginary dust off the sleeve of his loudly checked jacket and said, "Exactly. —Mr. Jarvik, during the course of the dinner I asked you what tune you were humming and you said you were improvising. I don't think that's quite right. You hummed again several times after that and it was always the same tune. Now that you're being grilled, you're forced to give full and honest answers, as I hope Manny has explained to you. I therefore repeat: what was the tune you were humming?"

Trumbull intervened. "What kind of stupid question is that?"

Gonzalo turned a haughty face on Trumbull. "As the griller, I'm under the impression I can ask any question I choose consistent with human dignity. Host's decision."

"Go ahead, Manny," said Rubin, thus appealed to. "Ask away. —And leave him alone, Tom."

Gonzalo said, "Answer the question, Mr. Jarvik." And when Jarvik still hesitated, Gonzalo said, "I'll help you out. This is the tune," and he hummed a few bars.

Avalon said, at once, "I know what that is. It's 'The Lost Chord.' The music is by Arthur Sullivan of the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Except for those operettas, Sullivan is known only for the music to two songs. One is 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' and the other is 'The Lost Chord.' "

"Is that what you were humming, Jarvik?"

"I suppose so. You know how a song gets trapped in your mind and won't get out."

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There was a chorus of agreement from the others and Avalon said sententiously, "It's a universal complaint."

"Well, whenever I'm trapped in some sort of loudness," said Jarvik, "that song keeps going through my head."

Drake chuckled. "If you're going to be dealing with Manny, you'll be humming it till one of you dies."

Gonzalo said, "Does it have some significance in that connection? What are the words?"

"I only know a few words, actually."

"*I* know the words," said Avalon.

"Don't sing them!" cried out Trumbull in sudden alarm.

Avalon, whose singing voice was well known to resemble the sound of an alligator in heat, said with dignity, "I shall recite them. The words are by a lady named Adelaide Anne Proctor, concerning whom I know nothing, and the poem goes as follows."

He cleared his throat.

"Seated one day at the organ, I was weary and ill at ease
And my fingers wandered idly over the noisy keys.
I don't know what I was playing, or what I was dreaming then;
But I struck one chord of music, like the sound of a great Amen.
It flooded the crimson twilight, like the close of an angel's psalm,
And it lay on my fevered spirit with a touch of infinite calm.
It quieted pain and sorrow, like love overcoming strife;
It seemed like the harmonious echo from our discordant life.
It linked all perplexed meanings into one perfect peace,
And trembled away into silence as if it were loth to cease.
I have sought, but I seek it vainly, that one lost chord divine,
Which came from the soul of the organ, and entered into mine.
It may be that Death's bright angel will speak in that chord again,
It may be that only in Heaven shall I hear that grand Amen."

There was a short silence and then Halsted said, "You know, I wonder about that. I don't know how many different chords you can strike on a large organ, considering all the different stops you can push and pull and the things you do with your feet. I suppose it's a very large number and you're not likely to find a particular chord just by fooling around at random."

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Rubin said testily, "We'll leave it to your mathematical bent to work out the total number of chords, Roger. As for you, Ted Jarvik, we can at least see why you hum that song when things are noisy. All that talk about infinite calm and one perfect peace and trembling away into silence. Naturally, your mind reverts to the song."

"No," said Jarvik quietly, shaking his head, "that's not it."

"Hah," shouted Gonzalo in triumph, "I knew it, I knew it—I have a sixth sense about these things! What is it? What does that song mean to you?"

"Quiet, Mario," said Avalon. "Now, Mr. Jarvik, if Mario has managed to touch a sore point, something about which you don't like to speak, please do so, anyway. I assure you nothing you say will ever leave this room."

Jarvik looked about at the assembled Black Widowers in bewilderment and said, "How did this ever manage to come up? It's a sore point, certainly, but I can talk about it without trouble. It's just something that's totally uninteresting to anyone but me."

"You can never tell," said Gonzalo, grinning.

Henry refilled the brandy glasses, and Jarvik sighed and began:

I'm a quiet man [said Jarvik] as perhaps you can tell. I'm told it shows. There's something ironic in the fact that I have to live and work in Manhattan, but a man must earn a living.

Still, I'm a single man, I don't have a wife and children to support—not yet, anyway—and I can indulge myself now and then. So two or three times a year I take a week off and go to a resort up the Hudson River. It's a large, rambling mansion with a Victorian atmosphere. The clientele is composed largely of people who are middle-aged or older and everything about the place is staid and respectable. Even the young people who happen to come there are impressed, or perhaps *oppressed,* by the atmosphere and behave themselves.

It means that it is quiet to some degree, and at night particularly it is very quiet. Soothing. I love it, and naturally I even try to escape what little noise exists. People *will* talk, after all, and since there are hundreds in the house at all times the talk can mount up. There are also vehicles—trucks, lawn-mowers, and so on.

The place is set in an estate of thousands of acres of hilly woodland laced by road and pathways, some of which are very rough. It's my particular pleasure to walk those pathways, looking for someplace where I can see only trees and huge glacier-brought rocks, seat

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myself in one of the gazebos that dot the roads, and look at the wildness of the scenery and listen to the silence. There are, of course, the calling of the birds, the rustling of the leaves—but that is no bother. Such natural sounds simply punctuate and emphasize the silence.

But no matter where I go, where I sit, sooner or later, usually sooner, I can hear human voices. There are groups tramping on nearby trails or following along the one I just took. I always found it irritating and would feel invaded. It's silly, I know. After all, I was only one of hundreds, but I felt I ought to be undisturbed. I would get up and keep on wandering, looking always for a quiet place, a really quiet place—and never finding it.

One time as I was sitting in one of my favorite gazebos, a man passed, looked at me, hesitated a moment, and said, in half a whisper, "May I join you?"

I nodded. I couldn't refuse, though I resented him at once. And I couldn't immediately rise and leave without being unbearably discourteous.

After we'd been there in utter silence some five minutes, the inevitable sound of conversation came from up the road and there was an explosion of feminine laughter. My new-found companion grimaced and said, "Isn't that annoying?"

My heart warmed to him at once. I shook my head. "You can't get away from it."

He said, "In one place you can," then stopped short as though he had been trapped into saying too much. But I waited with an inquiring look on my face, and he said, "There's a place I discovered three-four years ago. —Would you like to see it?"

"Quiet?"

"Oh, yes."

"That would be nice."

"Come with me." He rose, and looked about as if he were taking his bearings. It was a beautifully sunny day, clear blue sky, unclouded, not too warm at all, so when he set off, I followed gladly.

I didn't like to speak, but finally I had to say, "I haven't seen you about."

"I'm usually out on the trails."

"So am I," I said, my heart warming further. "Ted Jarvik is my name," I said, putting out my hand.

He took it and shook it heartily. "Call me Dark Horse," he said.

And at this point, he suddenly walked right into the woods and

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began scrambling through and around the underbrush. I was glad I had on a pair of slacks. Had it been warmer, I might have been in shorts and I would undoubtedly have been plant-scratched and insect-bitten. As it was, I followed dutifully.

I couldn't make out where he was going. There was no path and we were clambering over boulders as though we were mountain-climbing. Despite the coolness of the day, I was puffing, hot, and sweaty before long. Finally, we stopped for a bit under the hemlocks and my companion said, "I usually stop here to catch my breath. It takes me longer these days."

I panted a bit, welcoming the break, and said, "How do you know where you're going?"

"Landmarks. A tree that looks just so. A rock with a particular pattern of moss. I notice these things automatically and don't forget them. It's just a knack, but I never get lost."

I said ruefully, "You're lucky. I have no sense of direction at all. I get irretrievably lost in hotel corridors. Maids have to take me by the hand and lead me to my room."

My companion laughed and said, "I'm sure you have many talents. My inability to get lost is the only one I've got."

"You said your name is Dark Horse. You're not an Indian, are you? A Native American?" He looked no more Indian than I did.

"Not at all. It's not my name. I just said to call me that. You see, I believe if you really want to come out on a vacation you should shuck all the paraphernalia of your ordinary life. I have to give my real name to the hotel, because I have to make a reservation and I use my credit card, but while I'm here I won't be called by my name. Nor will I talk about my business. I simply won't recognize any part of my ordinary self. Whatever I am, officially, is back in Manhattan. It isn't here."

I was struck by that. "Interesting idea. I ought to do the same. Not that I'm very social when I come up here."

He said, "Rested a bit? Let's go, then. We don't have much farther."

I tried to watch where he turned and to observe landmarks, but it was no use. I'm not a noticing man. To me, a tree is a tree and a rock is a rock. —But then we half slid down into a hollow and Dark Horse whispered, "This is it."

I looked about. The rocks enclosed us on almost every side. There were trees growing between them here and there. Ferns flourished. It was cool, very cool—welcomingly cool.

Above all else, it was quiet. There wasn't a sound. A rustle of

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leaves now and then. A faint insect stridulation. Once a brief bird-call. But there was a healing silence in a world which has become one large, long, eternal cacophony of noise.

There was a rocky ledge at a convenient height and my companion indicated it silently. We sat down and I let the silence flow into me. What did the poem say? "It lay on my fevered spirit with a touch of infinite calm."

We sat there half an hour, and in all that time I said nothing, and my companion said nothing, and there wasn't a human sound of any kind—no distant laughter, no crackle of faroff conversation, no vibration of any internal-combustion engine, nothing. I had never experienced anything like it.

Finally, my companion rose and, without saying anything, asked the question as to whether we ought to go now. Reluctantly, and without saying anything, I answered that we might.

Out we went. We were a quarter mile away before I dared speak. "How did you find the place?" I asked.

"Accident at first. Since then, I've gone back at least half a dozen times. I love it. It's somewhere out of reach of all the trails, and as far as I know it's not on any of the hotel maps. It's just a hidden nook, known only to me, I think—and now you."

"Thanks for showing me—really," I said with infinite gratitude. "You wouldn't think there would be a spot untrodden by human feet in a place like this."

"Why not?" said Dark Horse. "I imagine that all over the world there are little areas undisturbed by humanity, sometimes in places that are very busy and crowded overall. There are fewer than there used to be, I'm sure, and perhaps someday they'll all be gone—but not yet, not yet."

He led me back to one of the main trails and we scrambled over rocks and roots and through the underbrush again. To me, it seemed uphill both ways, but he got us back. I said goodbye and thanked him again and we shook hands.

I didn't see him at dinner, though I looked, and in fact I didn't see him again during the remainder of my stay and have never seen him again from that day to this.

The day after he took me to the quiet place, I tried to return on my own. I took a book with me and some sandwiches I begged at the kitchen, with the intention of staying there most of the day if the weather held, but of course I never made it. I had no luck at all. I was wrong from the first turning, I believe.

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I didn't give up, though. After I returned to the city, I kept dreaming of the quiet place, and as soon as I could manage I returned to the resort, studied the map, and marked off the area I felt must contain it. I could make my way to the gazebo where I met Dark Horse, and from there I set about a systematic course of exploration. It did me no good whatever. I could never find the place. No matter how I tried to remember the twists and turns, no matter how I kidded myself into believing I recognized one of those blasted trees or rocks, no matter what bogs I slogged through or what crags I stumbled over, I ended up nowhere. I had bites, and scratches, and bruises, and contusions, and sprains. What I didn't have was the place.

It's become an obsession with me. I happened to know that passage of "The Lost Chord" and I suppose I began to hear it go through my head with appropriate changes in words— "I have sought, but I seek it vainly, that one lost place divine, from which came the spirit of silence that entered into me."

And I suppose I hum it when things grow loud and chaotic.

There was a pronounced pause when Jarvik concluded.

Finally Halsted said, "I suppose you simply need this fellow who took you there to take you there again so you can mark off each twist and turn on the map as best you can."

Gonzalo said hesitantly, "I suppose the fellow really existed. You didn't dream it, did you?"

Jarvik frowned. "Believe me, I didn't dream it. And he wasn't an elf leading me into fairyland, either. It happened exactly as I told you. The problem is that he had a precise sense of direction and I have none at all."

"Then you ought to find him," said Rubin flatly, "if you're that stuck on being in the middle of nowhere."

"Fine," said Jarvik, "I agree. I ought to find him. Now tell me how. I don't know his room number. I don't know his name. It didn't occur to me to try to identify him at the front desk that evening or the next day." He shook his head and seemed to debate with himself whether to go on or not. Then he shrugged and said, "I might as well tell you how obsessed I've become. The last time I was at the resort, I spent half the day with the various desk-employees trying to get a list of the people who had been at the hotel the day on which I was taken to the quiet place.

"It took a lot of negotiating and a lot of scurrying through records, and then they were kind enough to make me up an alphabetized list

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containing two hundred forty-nine names. They did it for me because I'm a regular customer and because I spread fifty dollars among them.

"They didn't include addresses because, quite rightly, that is against policy, and so I made one last effort to find the place the next day—and failed, of course—then spent the remainder of the stay studying the list of names.

"And, you know, I've memorized them. Not on purpose, of course. I just memorized them. I can rattle them off in the alphabetical order in which they were arranged. I happen to have one of those memories." He brooded a little. "If only my sense of direction were as good as my memory for items on a list."

Drake said, frowning through the smoke of his cigarette, "How would the list of names help you?"

Jarvik said, "The first thing that occurred to me was that the false name he used must have some reason behind it. Why would anyone call himself Dark Horse? Possibly because the initials were the same as those of his real name. So I went through the list and there was only one D. H. and the name was Dora Harboard. Well, my friend was not a woman, so that was out.

"Then I thought that perhaps the initials were reversed, so I looked for an H. D. and there was none. Then I looked for unattached males. A great many people were listed as, let us say, Ira and Hortense Abel, to take the first names on the list. It seemed to me I ought to eliminate them, especially if they had children with them. That left me with seventeen unattached males. At first I thought that was a big advancement, but then I realized that Dark Horse gave me no indication that he was unattached. He might well have had a wife, maybe with a child or children back in his room or out attending the mahjong game that was being played in the lounge that afternoon."

Trumbull said, "You could try *force majeure*. Follow up every male name on the list and see if one of them is Dark Horse. Who knows, you may strike it lucky the first name you try. And you know he lives in Manhattan. He said so. Try the phonebook to begin with."

Jarvik said, "One of the people listed is S. Smith. I dread the thought of how many Smiths there are in the phonebook with S as the first initial. Besides, if I recall correctly, he said that whatever he was officially was back in Manhattan. It seems to me that meant he worked in Manhattan, not necessarily that he lived there. He

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could live in any of the five boroughs, or in New Jersey, or Connecticut, or Westchester.

"Listen, I've thought of *force majeure*. Just to show you, I thought I might hire someone at some small nearby airfield to fly me over the resort so I could see the spot from above, but I know I wouldn't recognize it—not from above, in a hurried pass. And even if I did, they'd have to land me back at the airport and when I tried to reach the place from the ground I'd fail again.

"I even thought that perhaps I could hire a helicopter, and if I recognized the spot I could have myself lowered by some sort of rope while the helicopter hovered overhead. That was ridiculous, though. I wouldn't have the nerve to dangle from a helicopter even if I recognized the place—and then, after I left it, what if I couldn't find my way back? I couldn't very well use a helicopter every time, could I?"

Gonzalo said, "Dark Horse. Isn't that a racing term?"

"Originally, yes," said Avalon. "It refers to some horse of unknown potential that might have an outside chance to win, especially if it enters a race in which all the other horses are known quantities."

"Why *dark* horse, then?" said Halsted.

"I presume," said Avalon, "as an indication of how minimal the information is. After all, most horses are dark in coloring. Besides, 'dark' gives the impression of mystery, of the unknown."

"Well," said Gonzalo, "perhaps this fellow has some connection with the racing game."

Jarvik said bitterly, "Fine. Suppose he does? How does that help me find him?"

"Besides," said Trumbull, "it seems to me that 'dark horse' has spread out to mean anyone who enters a contest without being a known item. In boxing, tennis—in politics, even."

"And how does *that* help me find him?" said Jarvik.

Avalon sighed heavily and said, "Mr. Jarvik, why don't we look at 'The Lost Chord' from another angle? Roger pointed out that a complex organ might have many, many varieties of chords and that one chord could be easily lost among the quantity. But that's surely a way of looking at it that is rather too simplistic. Any sensation consists of the sensation itself, objectively, and of the person receiving the sensation, subjectively. The same chord is always the same chord if it is measured by an instrument that analyzes its wave function. However, the chord one *hears* may well vary with the mood and immediate circumstances of the listener.

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"The person playing the organ in the poem was 'weary and ill at ease.' For that reason, the chord had a particular effect on him. 'It quieted pain and sorrow' which he may have been feeling. From then on, when he sought the chord again his mood would be one of anxious expectation, of careful attention, and even if he heard it again, the same chord precisely, it would not strike him in the same way and he would not consider it to be the same chord. No wonder he sought it vainly—he was seeking to duplicate not only the chord but himself as he had been."

Jarvik said, "You are saying?"

"I am saying, Mr. Jarvik," said Avalon, "that perhaps you ought to attach less importance to the place. You found it on a perfect day. You found it when someone else was guiding you there so that you were, in a sense, carefree. If you find it again a second time, it may be on a less desirable day—when it is hotter, or colder, or cloudier. You yourself will be seeking anxiously, you will not be at ease. The result is that it may not be the same place you remember. You will be bitterly disappointed. Would it not be better to remain with the memory and let it go at that?"

Jarvik's head bent and for a few moments, he seemed lost in thought. Then he said, "Thank you, Mr. Avalon. I think you're right. If I fail to find the place, I will certainly try to follow your advice and find solace in it. However—I would like, if I can, to find it once more, just to make sure. After all, Dark Horse found it a number of times and enjoyed it each time."

"Dark Horse knew how to get there," said Avalon. "His own mood was fairly constant, and it might be he always chose days of particularly favorable weather to go there."

"Even so," said Jarvik stubbornly, "I'd like to go there once more if there were a way of finding it."

"But apparently there isn't," said Avalon. "You must admit that."

"I don't know," said Mario. "No one has asked Henry."

"In this case," said Avalon stubbornly, "even Henry can do nothing. There's nothing to seize on."

"What have we to lose?" demanded Mario. "Henry, what can you tell us?"

Jarvik, who had been listening in astonishment, now turned to Rubin and mouthed silently: The waiter?

Rubin put a finger to his lips and shook his head slightly.

Henry, who had been listening with absorption, said, "I must say that I agree fully with Mr. Avalon with respect to the subjective

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nature of the charms of the place and would hate to have Mr. Jarvik spoil an idyllic memory. Nevertheless—"

"Aha," said Gonzalo. "Go on, Henry."

Henry smiled in his avuncular fashion and said, "Nevertheless, the one thing to seize upon is the phrase 'dark horse,' which everyone *has* been seizing upon, as it happens. May I ask, Mr. Jarvik, if by any chance there was anyone on the list named Polk—not a very common name. A James Polk, perhaps?"

Jarvik's eyes opened wide. "You're kidding."

"Not at all. May I take it there *was* such a name?"

"There's a J. Polk, certainly. It could be James."

"Then perhaps that is your man."

"But why?"

"Mr. Trumbull mentioned, I believe, that 'dark horse' is used in politics. That, I suspect, is its most common use these days. A dark horse is some politician who is never thought of in connection with nomination by a major party but who is nevertheless nominated as a way of breaking what otherwise seems an intransigent deadlock. Dark horses rarely show up nowadays because the nomination is decided by primary contests. However, as recently as nineteen forty, Wendell Willkie was a dark horse named by the Republican party.

"Still, the name is most often used in American history for the very first party nominee who was a dark horse. In eighteen forty-four the Democrats were all set to nominate ex-President Martin Van Buren, but he needed a two-thirds majority and intransigent Southern opposition prevented that. Out of sheer weariness, the convention switched to Tennessee Senator James Knox Polk, whom no one had thought of in connection with the nomination. He was the first dark-horse candidate, and went on to win the election. He made a pretty good one-term President."

"He's right," said Rubin. "Do you know everything, Henry?"

"No, Mr. Rubin," said Henry, "but I had a dim memory of it, and while the discussion was going on I checked our reference shelf. It may be that the J. Polk on Mr. Jarvik's list is a lineal, or collateral, descendant—which is why he took the name of Dark Horse."

"Amazing," muttered Jarvik.

"However," said Henry, "you may still have trouble finding him, Mr. Jarvik, and even if you find him he may still be the wrong person, and even if he is the right person you may still end up disappointed in the quiet place. However—may good luck be with you."

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a *NEW* short story by

LORRAINE COLLINS

Martha, back in her job as bailiff in Judge Farrar's court after more than five months away in California, always asked for salad and iced tea at lunchtime. While the jury was ladling the food in, she sat nearby and watched the local folks at the Star Cafe watching the jury. In a town like this, where everybody knew everybody else's business (or thought they did), being a juror gave a person special status. For a while, at least, you could claim to know something everybody else didn't . . .

EXHIBIT A

by LORRAINE COLLINS

Martha had to keep her eye on Wilbur Matson, the twelfth juror, who leaned back in his chair, eyes closed. Was he falling asleep again? She didn't want to risk having the judge frown at her again, but it was her job, wasn't it? Keep track of the jury—keep them awake, at least. He didn't want a mistrial, did he? But Judge Farrar was a man of little patience, and every time Martha walked—as quietly and invisibly as she could—toward the yellow oak railing that penned in the jury, there was a certain stir in the courtroom. Judge Farrar didn't like the slightest disturbance in his court, so he frowned, peering over his hornrimmed glasses, forcing his bushy white eyebrows into a collision as he gazed sternly at her. He didn't want her for his bailiff, anyway, and she knew it. Henry Bradshaw's widow a bailiff? Undignified. And only $4.60 an hour. How could a banker's widow need to work for $4.60 an hour?

Judge Farrar had thought he was rid of her, no doubt, when she went to California in January and didn't come back for more than five months, so Dennis Hunter got to be the bailiff for spring term

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of court. Dennis was a retired deputy sheriff, and more suitable for the job, in the judge's opinion. But no matter how sweet grandchildren are, no matter how mild the climate of California, no matter how comfortably fixed a banker's widow might be, there must be challenge, variety, and just plain entertainment in a person's life. Being a bailiff, when it wasn't tiresome and boring, was very entertaining. It certainly kept Martha up on news of the county.

Linda Dawson, the public defender, and State's Attorney Ben Blake had been up there whispering urgently with the judge for five minutes, and nobody else in the courtroom knew what was going on. It was very hot and stuffy, ceiling fans making a soft, ineffectual whirr, only stirring up the August heat. The jury looked limp and irritable, except for Wilbur Matson, who just looked limp. There were only half a dozen spectators in the courtroom this late in the afternoon. Hardly anybody who didn't have to be there on such a hot day would be, even to see a murder trial.

Joshua and Elaine Burr were there, of course, and Jimmy Paul. They sat quietly at the back of the room, as far as they could get from the man on trial for killing Joshua's mother Sarah. The defendant sat glumly alone at his table, trying to look respectable. He had shaved off his shaggy beard and cut his hair, and he was wearing a new white shirt. The deputy sheriff sat just behind him.

"All right, let's get on with it, Counsel," Judge Farrar said at last, sounding grouchy as usual. He looked toward the jury and Martha was relieved to see that Wilbur Matson had opened his eyes.

Linda turned away from the judge's bench and smiled nervously at Martha on her way back to the table where her client sat waiting. Brave girl, to smile at all after a whole day of being in Judge Farrar's courtroom, defending a man who sat sullenly staring at the floor most of the time. He wasn't making a good impression on the jury. But then, that probably didn't matter. Bert Schooler had a criminal record, an inexperienced defense attorney, no alibi, no friends, and virtually no hope. The peculiar thing was that he was standing trial at all. He should have plea-bargained like everybody else did. There was hardly enough work to keep a bailiff in tea and toast these days.

"He says he didn't do it," Linda said to Martha before the trial opened. "He was willing to plead something else—he knows what his record is—maybe plead involuntary manslaughter. But you know that wouldn't work with Judge Farrar."

No, it surely wouldn't. And shouldn't. If Bert Schooler beat Sarah Burr to death while trying to rob her of her savings, he should pay

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for it. Martha told Linda that in so many words. Killing somebody while committing a robbery was capital murder, and that was that.

"But, Martha, if he *didn't* kill poor old Mrs. Burr, he should have his day in court. And a competent defense. But what if I'm not good enough?" Linda was pacing back and forth in front of the counter in the small basement coffee room in the courthouse. Despite the heat, she was wearing her most official-looking dark-grey suit. Her hair was tied back. She tried to disguise her youth and tone down her beauty so she could be taken seriously as an attorney. People in Blue County still tended to think of her as cute little Linda Dawson, Len and Betty's youngest daughter. "Bert Schooler should be able to find justice here in Blue County just as well as down in Texas where his friends are."

"His friends are probably motorcycle hoodlums just like he is." Martha was sorry she had spoken quite so forcefully. She didn't want to sound like Judge Farrar—cranky and old. But she had known Sarah Burr, and liked her better than most people did. Most people might not care one way or another that the eccentric old lady was beaten to death, except that any violent crime in a small town caused a thrill of excitement.

Sarah wouldn't have liked Linda calling her "poor old Mrs. Burr," even though she might have gone out of her way to give the impression she was one step away from being one of those poor old bag ladies they showed on television. She insisted on living alone in a small house with a sagging porch and a yard full of weeds out on the edge of town. But Sarah was stubborn and smart and not as impoverished as she pretended. Martha could remember her laughing and saying, "I don't have much, Martha, just my widow's mite." But she winked broadly, knowing Martha knew.

It had been a delicious secret between Sarah and Martha's husband Henry for a long time. Henry had delivered her substantial monthly income from her investments, always in cash, on the first of every month. Henry never said a word about it to Martha, but when he died Sarah told her, and asked her to arrange for someone else to take care of the matter for her. There was no way of talking her out of it, so the best Martha could do was pass Sarah along to Roger Edwards, who had taken over Henry's job. Roger didn't approve at all, though—he was much more conservative than Henry had been.

"Does her son know about this, Martha? It's dangerous giving cash to an old lady like that," Roger said. "Somebody can come along

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and sell her aluminum siding or a new roof or something. She should be looked after."

But it was Sarah's money to do with as she wished, no law against it. She didn't want to go to a rest home and she didn't want to be looked after, even though Joshua was embarrassed when neighbors complained about his mother. They complained about the weeds around the house and there would be at least one visit from the police every year because she played the radio too loud—that very radio that was now Exhibit A.

"Just have my widow's mite," Sarah had said the last time Martha saw her. "And my piano, of course, and the organ. And the radio." She held up the big portable cassette player that looked like it belonged in a teenager's bedroom. "Jimmy Paul gave me this! My grandson! He's got my talent, that boy. And more brains than his father ever had. I don't know how that halfwit son of mine and his uppity wife ever produced a boy like Jimmy Paul. I can't stand his father, and neither can he, but we understand each other, Jimmy Paul and me."

Sarah belonged to a religious group that met in her little living room every Friday night, when everybody sang and played the piano and the organ and clapped their hands and praised the Lord. They caused quite a ruckus, and in summer, when the windows were open, it was pretty loud. The neighbors might have tolerated that all right, but Sarah always recorded everything on her radio-cassette player and then played it back night after night until the next Friday. That was when the neighbors would eventually complain and the policeman would make his call.

So Sarah was *different*—but who would have thought she would end as she did? That one night somebody would beat her and kill her and ransack her house? Two days later, Bert Schooler was picked up in a campground five miles from town, up Bluebell Canyon. He had the radio.

In two years of being bailiff, watching drunk-driving cases, civil suits, wrangles over wills, and a couple of assault-and-battery cases, Martha had never seen a more open-and-shut case than this one. Still, Bert Schooler insisted he was innocent and Linda Dawson seemed to believe him—the only person in Blue County who did, apparently.

"It doesn't make sense, Martha," Linda said that morning in the coffee room before the trial. "If Bert did kill Mrs. Burr, why would he hang around here for two days? He says somebody sold him the

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radio. He figured it was stolen, but he didn't particularly care about that. He'd just bought it, and within half an hour the sheriff showed up."

"Did he say who he bought it from?"

Linda shook her head. "He says it was just somebody who wandered into the campground. Wearing a knit cap pulled low over his head and dark glasses. An old leather jacket with the collar up around his chin."

"Wandered in—on *foot*? Five miles from town?"

"Right. Sheriff Welk didn't waste time looking for anybody."

It really wasn't a very good story, but Bert stuck with it. There sat the radio—Exhibit A—on the table in front of the judge's bench. There wasn't any question about it being Sarah Burr's—there was a name strip stuck inside the battery case. Kind of a strange place for one, though, come to think of it. Most people put the identification on the outside. And why would Sarah put one on at all? All morning, Martha sat staring at the radio-tape player when she wasn't keeping her eye on Wilbur Matson in the jury box.

During the recess for lunch, she had to herd the jury the whole length of Main Street over to the Star Cafe and make sure they didn't talk to each other or anybody else about the trial. It was the Star Cafe's turn to feed the jury this time, so she didn't dare take them anywhere else or Jessie Wright would be complaining to the clerk of courts again.

Jessie had a long table set up in the back and the jurors marched self-consciously through the cafe, nodding to their neighbors and acquaintances. Jessie stood importantly by the door as they filed in, and as the last one went by she touched Martha's arm and leaned forward to whisper, "How's it going, Martha? Have they started to *deliberate* yet?"

Martha shook her head.

"Has Jimmy Paul testified about finding the body? Did he say what it was like?" Her eyes were shining with excitement.

Martha just shook her head again, and Jessie started happily bustling about, putting twelve plates of meatloaf on the long table, setting out bowls of peas and potatoes and cole slaw, filling up baskets of rolls as fast as they emptied, and bringing on the apple pie and coffee in barely enough time for the jurors to eat it before they had to be back. Juries always had a good appetite during a trial, and only went off their feed when the time came to start deciding

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the case. But eating all the food at noontime—no wonder they were sluggish, no wonder Wilbur Matson slid lower and lower in his chair.

Martha always asked for salad and iced tea at lunchtime. While the jury was ladling the food in, she sat nearby and watched the local folks watching the jury. In a town like this, where everybody knew everybody else's business or thought they did, being a juror gave a person special status. For a while, at least, you could claim to know something everybody else didn't.

Walking back to the courthouse with the jury, Martha thought about that. Being gone to California for so long made her look at her hometown with new eyes, and she realized that Sarah Burr's secret probably wasn't such a secret after all. It would be very strange if absolutely no one knew she had money in the house. But Bert Schooler wouldn't know, would he? Why would he pick a shabby house like Sarah's to rob?

When they got back from the cafe, Martha waited in the hall while the jurors went to the ladies and gents. Leaning against the wall by the courtroom door, Sheriff Welk looked relaxed and peaceful, chewing on a toothpick. The prisoner must still be in the jail below. Martha had a question she wanted to ask the sheriff—something she had been puzzling over as she sat staring at the radio that morning—and she went over to him.

"Jasper, how did you happen to go out to that campground that day? That was pretty lucky to find the radio there, when Bert Schooler says he'd had it less than an hour."

Linda Dawson came up just as she finished the question.

The sheriff straightened up, giving the women a little smile. "You don't *believe* Schooler, do you, Martha? Maybe I shouldn't say so—but I guess the jury is out of earshot. The man's not a very good liar. Shouldn't be able to fool a smart lady like you."

Martha tried again. "Well, it was a lucky chance, wasn't it, Sheriff? Finding Bert right there with the radio, making no attempt to hide it?"

"Why don't you answer Martha, Sheriff?" Linda said. "How *did* you happen to show up there so—fortuitously?"

Welk laughed. "My, Linda, you sure learned some big words in the university. Now don't you trouble yourself any. We got a phone call—somebody reporting some bikers out in Bluebell Canyon, acting suspicious. Thought I should check it out."

Linda stared at him. "Phone call from who?"

The sheriff shrugged. "Don't know. Just a call from a citizen saying

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there were suspicious people out there—I should go by to take a look."

"How curious," Martha said mildly. "And he had a lot of money on him, too, I suppose."

"Who? Schooler? Fifty or sixty dollars, I think."

Martha was going to ask him if that didn't surprise him, but the jurors started coming into the hall and the sheriff headed downstairs for his prisoner. Soon everybody was back in the courtroom again, but as she sat through the afternoon proceedings Martha brooded. In the end, she decided to write a brief note to Linda.

In the morning, when she recalled Sheriff Welk to the stand, Linda asked him to explain how he happened to go to the campground and had him read the receipt for all Bert Schooler's possessions. The sheriff said he'd had a knife, a watch, and fifty-six dollars in cash.

Then Linda called Roger Edwards to the stand. She looked studiously at some papers in her hand as she began questioning him.

"Mr. Edwards, you regularly delivered cash to Mrs. Burr. How much money did you deliver to her two days before her death?"

The banker hesitated, frowning.

"I think I have the sum listed right here, Mr. Edwards, if you need to be reminded."

"It was—twenty-seven hundred dollars, I believe."

Somebody in the jury gave a little gasp.

"You often delivered such an amount to Mrs. Burr?"

"It was slightly larger than usual. But that was approximately the monthly sum."

"Every month—year in, year out?"

"Yes."

"Her house was paid for, her utility bills were very low. She had Social Security and she hardly spent any money on herself. What did she do with that money every month, Mr. Edwards?"

The banker scowled. "I have no way of knowing."

"She didn't invest it? Buy things with it?"

"She kept it under her *mattress,* I believe." It obviously pained him to say it.

"Didn't you advise her to do something else with it? Let you invest it for her? Take care of it?"

"Yes. She wasn't interested."

"How much money would you expect a burglar to have found in Mrs. Burr's house the night she was murdered?"

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"Unless she was giving it away, there should have been some thousands there. Ten or twenty thousand." He reached into his pocket for a handkerchief to wipe his face.

"Bert Schooler only had fifty-six dollars, Mr. Edwards, so I guess he didn't get it. Somebody else must have. How many people did you tell about the money Mrs. Burr had in her house?"

"That was a confidential matter—I didn't talk about it."

"Not to anybody? Weren't you worried about the money? Weren't you afraid she'd buy something foolish or maybe give it away—to that religious group she belonged to, for instance? Weren't you concerned?"

"Yes, I was. I told her son. I felt he should know—should get a guardianship, perhaps."

"And did he think so, too?"

"Objection!" the state's attorney said, but the jury had turned to look at Joshua Burr.

Joshua sat looking pale as death, gripping the bench in front of him.

"Sarah Burr *had* given money to her religious group, hadn't she, Mr. Edwards? And when you told Mr. Burr that, he was really upset, wasn't he?"

Joshua started to get to his feet, but his wife grabbed his arm.

Linda walked to the table in front of the judge and picked up the cassette player. "Mr. Edwards, this is Sarah Burr's tape recorder, with a tape still in it—the last one she recorded. I played that tape again last night—only this time I listened to the end. It's quite interesting, Mr. Edwards. It starts out to record her last session with her group, everybody singing to the piano. But then she recorded something else. The *very* last thing she recorded before she died. Shall I play it for you, Mr. Edwards?"

"You *didn't* tell me, Roger!" Joshua was standing up in the back, shaking his fist. "You didn't tell me a damned thing!"

"Order!" Judge Farrar pounded his gavel. Martha had never seen him more angry, or Wilbur Matson wider awake.

Roger Edwards was sweating. "I did tell him. I told him he should do something—all that money down the drain—but he didn't listen! It's fiscally irresponsible! It's criminal to—"

"You couldn't let that go on, could you?" Linda said gently. "It wasn't right, was it, Mr. Edwards?"

"No. No, it wasn't!"

Linda set the tape recorder down on the bench. "And so things

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got out of hand when you started arguing about it that night, Mr. Edwards."

"She was a stubborn old woman!" Roger said. "She came at me with a rolling pin. A rolling pin!"

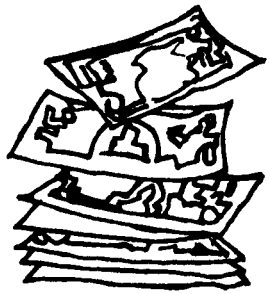
Everybody talked about it for weeks afterward, long after Bert Schooler had hightailed it back to Texas and Roger Edwards pleaded temporary insanity. Linda Dawson was a real celebrity for a while, but Judge Farrar was so mad at her he told her not to appear in his court again. He had to take that back, of course. She *was* still public defender. But when he played the tape and just heard a lot of singing and piano-playing he was extremely upset and called her into chambers.

"Who put you up to that?" he wanted to know. "Tricking a witness in my courtroom, like you were some TV lawyer! I should declare a mistrial!"

Linda stood quietly and took it all, and then she invited Martha out for dinner, to a lot better place than the Star Cafe.

"Did you know it was Roger Edwards when you sent me that note, Martha?" she asked over her whiskey sour.

Martha smiled. "Well, it probably had to be either Roger or Joshua, didn't it? And of the two—well, Roger's the more intelligent and inclined to think of security—protection. He'd be the one to think of framing someone else, I thought. So I was willing—you'll pardon the expression—to bank on it."



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a ***NEW*** short story by

JEFFRY SCOTT

"You want to watch yourself," Marie said listlessly. "Keep it up and I'll take you to court. There's laws about persecuting people."

It was so absurd that Peggy Ipswich cried out in protest. Marie, misunderstanding, turned gracious. "I shan't get my solicitor in just yet, mind. Just stay your side of the fence and stop poking your nose in . . ."

THE DIVIDING FENCE

by JEFFRY SCOTT

The children upset Peggy Ipswich. It wasn't their rudeness, or the covert hostility—uncannily mature and stressed by complete lack of youthful grace or vulnerability. What made her teeth grind and her hands shake was that she'd never done anything to them, hardly exchanged a word with the little strangers next door.

She could have borne amusement and derision. Peggy was aware of having a funny name. During World War II she had worked in the Women's Voluntary Service canteen at Dorminster Magna and the American bomber crews had grinned or sniggered and sometimes hollered with laughter when the vicar's wife called, "Miss Ipswich, Miss Ipswich, more cups!" as it might be, or, "Miss Ipswich, the urn's playing up again!"

No harm in that, she'd been flustered, perhaps flattered in a mild way—it came to the same thing. "*Ips*-wich, Is-*swich,* Swich-swach," the men would chortle, deliberately tangling their tongues, then dismiss the matter and herself. Peggy had a knack for being unobtrusive, mouse-drab, humble, quick on her feet, very grateful for the homely face and unremarkable figure that encouraged glances

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to slide on to prettier friends. Not that she had many of those, though everybody knew her.

She'd never done anything to the Marshall children. All Peggy Ipswich had done was live next door to the house Les Marshall bought in 1985. She lived alone in the only bungalow in Peartree Close, poor relation among half a dozen mock Tudor four-bedroom houses. Peartree Close had been a farm track, nameless and undeveloped, when Percy Ipswich bought his ground in 1919.

The Marshall children would have relished Percy Ipswich. He'd been gassed in Flanders—blown up serving in the Ypres Salient in '17. His face was the wrong color, stained rather than tanned, there was a perceptible dent in his skull, and he dribbled when he spoke, so he tried not to talk at all. Wanting to get off by himself, an ambition shared by his wife, Gladys, who decamped as soon as their baby was weaned, Percy Ipswich bought land from the farmer and built the bungalow.

"We lived in a tent that first summer, Little'un," he told Peggy. "By winter, there was one room that kept out the worst of the cold, and that happened to be the bathroom, so that's where we lived that winter." Percy would talk to his daughter by the hour, back turned, gazing out of the window.

Ipswich supported himself and his daughter by selling cartoons to trashy magazines. Somehow he gained access to paper offcuts from some packaging process, his for the trouble of taking them away in the sidecar of his motorbike. An ingenious man, he used the stuff for beer mats and cocktail coasters. He printed them in the shed behind the bungalow, with customized designs for a number of roadhouses and pubs. Somehow he made money right through the Depression. The local council never got to hear of the project, which was just as well, for it defied the Green Belt zoning laws by carrying on light industry of a kind in an area restricted to agriculture and housing.

Peggy grew up knowing that they were doing something vaguely wrong, though not, her father stressed, sinful. "If I didn't have you and the business and my hidey-hole here, I'd die," Percy Ipswich declared and she believed him. It didn't make for an outgoing, confident personality, though Peggy was happy enough.

Soon after the end of World War II, Peartree Close got its official name and the big houses. A little longer afterward, Percy died. Peggy was startled to learn that he'd owned the land on which those houses stood and had left her comfortably off. She could have sold

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the bungalow and gone to live anywhere—but where? So she stayed where she was, and in due time Les Marshall bought the house next door.

The previous owners had been a retired couple named Anderton. He'd been in insurance and his wife did needlepoint and called once a week to take tea with Peggy and show her the latest letters and snapshots from Jim and Susie in Melbourne and Brian in Toronto and Helen, married to a dentist in Scotland. Mrs. Anderton's brood always seemed to be up to something and Peggy considered them better value than those radio serials because they were true. She had watched them growing up and been their "Auntie Peg" in her day.

But Mr. Anderton died, it comes to us all—a blessing really, considering his arthritis and the heart condition—and the widow went off to Australia and Number six was sold.

Peggy watched the furniture van arrive and gave it an hour, then she went next door with two cups of tea and a saucer of biscuits on her best tin tray.

Les Marshall turned out to be one of those wrong-footing men who enjoy jokes yet seldom share them. He was wearing jeans and trainers and a creaking leather jacket over a hairily bare chest and there were tiny, yellowish clots of sleepy-dust at the corners of his eyes. Peggy spotted them immediately and kept glancing away, itching to tell him.

"What's this, then?" Marshall demanded jovially, as if she had arrived bearing a severed head. "Nice thought, luv, but we'll need a few straws."

Peggy gaped at him and there it was, the sleepy-dust, big as boulders now. And why would he want straws—to put in his hair? Then he jerked his thumb over his shoulder and she saw that the hallway was packed with children, four or five at least, with a silent girl, grubbily barefoot, nipples perceptible under a sequined T-shirt, beyond the pack.

"We'll need six more cuppas," Marshall explained. "Gawd, missus, your face! Only kidding, these'll come in handy for me 'n Marie, but if we want tea the gas is connected and the water's running, eh? No, you want to know what the road's getting itself into, who we are and where we fit into things, right?"

Peggy shook her head. A small voice, hard as ice, observed, "Funny old woman, Dad, she keeps pecking like a chicken. *Chookie, chookie,*

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chookie!" Breathless giggles, then another cold little voice confirmed, "Yuh, peck-peck chicken, she does look like."

"Cheeky little sods," Marshall commented with more amusement than reproof. He dropped his voice in an aside. "I'm Les and that's my lady, Marie, and this lot is the rest of the tribe. Dean and Mikey and Cheryl are mine and Tracey and Roy are hers."

Marie, tone limply straight as her yellow hair, said, "For Christ's sake, fetch that tea down here, darlin', seeing as the old girl fetched it round, I'm dying of thirst." Marshall grabbed the tray, making the cups slop. "Yeah, ta, nice thought. Oh, who are you when you're at home, then?"

"Miss Ipswich. Peggy. I'm from the bungalow next—" But the man was turning away, the front door closing.

As Peggy reached the gate, she heard the clatter of the letter-slot on the door flap behind her and one of the children shouted, "Witch, witch, silly old bitch!" When she turned, the flap snapped shut. From an uncurtained upper window, a small face stared back at her, blank, watchful.

Next morning, when Peggy went to collect her milk from the doorstep, she found that Marshall had left the tea things there the previous evening. The tray was awash with rainwater and an earwig had drowned in the bottom of a cup.

Peggy had never touched Percy Ipswich's workshop at the foot of the garden. Machinery had never been her friend and the shed was devoted to it: male objects, her father's property.

About a week after Marshall and Marie arrived, she got a terrible fright while pegging out her washing. She let a sheet collapse back into the wicker basket and hurried down the crazy-paving path. She hadn't sorted out the names, but two of the boys and a small girl, naked except for an abbreviated pink vest, stood in front of the workshop. "What—what's the matter?" Peggy muttered, flinching from asking what they were doing there.

A boy, still rattling the door handle, grunted, "What you got in here? We stood on the fence, you can see stuff through the skylight. Motorbike, looks like—not a Jap one, an old crock of a thing." He was perhaps eleven years old.

His twin confided, "Mikey's good with bikes. Give us a play on that one, Miss."

"I—I can't, I haven't got the key, it isn't mine to let you have. How did you get in here?"

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Recognizing the question as rhetorical—three slats of the boundary fence, old as the house, had been wrenched off the rail—the first boy complained, "You got to have a key. It's your shed, innit?"

"Go back to your own garden, dear, and take your sister with you. You mustn't just barge in here, your daddy would—"

Mutinous, disgusted, they retreated. Almost at once, she heard feet thudding on what had been the Andertons' back lawn and a unison-chanted "Silly ole witch, silly ole bitch, peck-peck chookie, sling her in the ditch!"

Les Marshall was changing the plugs of an elderly estate car in the drive of Number Six. He gave her a what-is-it-now? frown as she approached.

"I'm afraid your lads got into my garden just now, Mr. Marshall," she said.

"Not to worry. Little sods get everywhere but they never get lost, more's the pity. They'll come to no harm, luv—streetwise if nothing else." Barking his knuckles, he swore vilely.

Peggy tried again. "It's the fence, you see, Mr. Marshall. The side fence. Mr. Anderton kept meaning to repair it, but his health—"

"Yeah, bloody place is falling to bits. Still, I got nothing worth stealing, so fences are the least of my worries." He slammed the hood and nodded abstractedly. "Nice talking to you, but I'm late for work."

"See?"

Peggy looked around, then down. The little girl in pink was staring up at her mockingly. "See? You told on Dean and Mikey but their dad don't give a toss for nobody. See?" The tot put her tongue out with great deliberation, squinting to sight the tip.

"Ten balls?" Irritable, incredulous, Les Marshall kept the engine revving. A week had passed and Peggy Ipswich, finding him elusive, had been standing sentry at her front gate, grimly, tremblingly patient.

"They break my flowers, coming over, the balls. I've asked the children, asked them nicely. Yesterday, all afternoon—they must have bought some of them specially. When I went out last thing, I had to throw them all back, and I counted. There were tennis balls and the big hard plastic ones, the footballs and a golf ball. There were ten altogether and my poor little fir tree snapped in half."

Les cleared his throat, patently stifling a guffaw. "Little sods! Look, you're making heavy weather of this—kids will be kids and

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neighbors understand that, leastways they do where we come from. Keep the bloody balls, that'll stop 'em—serve 'em right." And to himself, "Bloody hell, life's too short." He drove away.

Marie appeared as soon as the car had turned the corner into the main road. "You want to watch yourself," she said listlessly. "Keep it up and I'll take you to court. There's laws about persecuting people."

It was so absurd that Peggy Ipswich cried out in protest. Marie, misunderstanding, turned gracious. "I shan't get my solicitor in just yet, mind. Just stay your side of the fence and stop poking your nose in."

He was as bad as them in his way, Peggy concluded. She heard him scolding some or one of the boys. "I'll beat your head in, keep going over there, teasing that old biddy. Can't you tell she's a troublemaker?"

"Only getting my *ball,* Dad. Only takes a minute." True, for at the bottom of the two gardens the dividing fence had been reduced to a brace of spaced rails—the slats had vanished and the children had only to step through. "It's *my* ball, Dad, I only *fetch* it."

Heavy sarcasm from Les. "Ever think of not booting it over in the first place, dummy?" But his voice changed. "Come on, get it past me . . . Whoops, where's it gone? . . . Now I'm off, streaking down the wing—tackle me, tackle, tackle! Play the ball, Roy, never mind the man . . . " Shouts, panting, the yelp of the pack aroused.

Finally Peggy paid Mr. Feather, the local handyman, to renew the farthest portion of the fence. The cost took her aback, but then again the slats were heavy, the new section six feet high. The work was completed on a Saturday morning and Les put his head around the slat before the last piece was nailed home.

"Now we'll all be happy, eh? You might have asked me—strictly speaking, I have a say in this fence. It's supposed to be mine." He spoke with sulky dignity, painstakingly polite and reasonable and reproachful. "Bee in your bonnet because the kids kick up a bit out of high spirits, but you never stop to think what an eyesore this is—different height, different color, all patched up like. And we got to live with it."

The balls kept coming over. The children merely threw harder or chose the older stretch of fencing.

They had other games. A favorite was to set a watcher at a knot-

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hole in the fence as commentator while one of the boys, in a ludicrously high, squeaky voice, relayed what Miss Ipswich was doing.

"Now I'm pushing my mower. Now I'm pushing it back. Now I'm stopping and scratching my nose."

"Picking it, Roy, bet she's picking it!"

"Now I'm going to empty the grassbox. Oh, dear, it's stuck. Silly old grassbox. Silly old mower. Silly old witch can't do it." They could maintain the game for as long as she stayed outdoors. Her lawns became shaggy and weeds flourished during the long summer holiday from school.

Sometimes there was a variation. Marie spent a lot of time on Number Six's patio that summer, sunning herself on a lounger. The oldest girl, voice pitched to reach eavesdroppers, would ask, "What's a spinster, Mums? Why does that loony next door have blotches all over her hands? Are they freckles? Why are they so big, then? Don't loonies get sent away? Why isn't she getting sent away?"

"Trash," said the milkman. "I'll knock in future and you take your bottle straight in. I saw that girl sneak round, saw her in my mirror from the other end of the street. They're playing nasty tricks on you."

"I—I thought it was the birds. They can peck the bottle caps, for the cream."

"Get away—birds nothing. Bird with grubby little fingers," he scoffed. Peggy's stomach turned, her throat closed. The milk had been tasting strange, of late.

Some six months after their arrival, the Marshalls had a row. The children were forever at odds with each other and at the tops of their voices, so Peggy—woken at 7:00 A.M. and drawn to the bedroom window—assumed that they'd started earlier than usual. But this was the adults, Marie on the front path of Number Six, screaming abuse and struggling to draw jeans up her knobby-kneed legs while Les roared and shook his fist from the porch.

The door slammed like a gunshot. Peggy, knotting the cord of her dressing gown, hastened downstairs. "D'you want to come in here, dear?"

Marie blinked at her, large breasts heaving, mouth shiny with spittle. "Piss off and leave me alone. You and your nagging, no wonder the pressure drives him potty." She turned her back and stormed off around the side of the house.

Les banged out of the place an hour afterward and minutes later

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Marie slipped indoors. At lunchtime, looking more presentable than Peggy had ever witnessed, she departed in a taxi. The driver had to make three trips to the front door for her luggage.

Unfortunately, she went alone. Les's temper worsened and his designer stubble darkened into a mangy beard and moustache. Peggy kept out of his way, but the children, wilder than ever, couldn't be avoided.

In the first week of September, Peggy waited for them to straggle off to school and then devoted a morning to inspecting the older portion of fence. She seldom threw anything away and now the bag of corks proved useful. Tapping them home with the edge of a trowel, she corked a dozen or more spyholes.

"Thought you were a bloody woodpecker," Les Marshall grumbled, making her start. He was leaning out of an upper window, looking dreadful. "What are you at now?"

"Just—seeing to the fence," she faltered, trying to hide the corks bag behind her back. He always made her feel guilty.

Screwing his face up, Les jeered. "The kids have a point. You must be dotty, touched in the head. Corks! Look, some of us have to earn our living, some of us work nights, know what I mean, luv?" The window slid down with a thump.

Peggy's heart raced and stammered. But the spyholes were blocked.

Oversleeping, Peggy was claimed by disturbing dreams. Rats scuttled, monkeys gibbered, a macaw screeched—she was captive in a bygone prison ship and lost in the jungle all at once. The rats chewed deafeningly, the wildlife chattered. She woke in a panic, sweaty, stale, temples pounding.

A drill clattered, giving the probable clue to the interlude. She recalled that roadwork was going on where Peartree Close joined the bigger street. Les Marshall would not be allowed much rest today. Peggy was human enough to experience spiteful pleasure at the thought.

After a belated breakfast, she went out to her neglected garden—and found the real foundation of the dream noises.

The patio and nearest area of lawn were scattered with corks. The children, active early, had hammered them all out again from their side of the fence. In several places, foliage poked through. They had scaled the fence, snapped branches from her miniature trees, and

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jammed them into every knothole. And as Peggy watched, a bit of branch wagged tauntingly. There was no wind, not even a breeze. In her head she could see one of the children crouched on the far side, grimacing with glee over vandalism piled on counterattack.

Snatching up a spade she'd abandoned when last put to flight by mockery (a corner of her attention noted it had been rusted by a few nights' dew, Dad would have frowned over such sloppiness), Peggy swung it against the protruding branch with a gasp of rage and frustration. The branch was a snug fit, but the spade was heavy and swung with the force of desperation. Leaves stripping, the fat finger of wood jumped three or four inches and lanced back through the knothole like a dagger.

Les Marshall, squatting on his side of the fence, peering at the torn end of the branch and giving it a tentative shake while wondering what the hell it signified, screamed and fell backward. Hands clapped to his right eye, he scrambled up, groaning and in agony.

Peggy heard something larger than a child, apparently berserk with rage, snarling noises unleashed by her blind lashing-out. Her foot hurt. She had dropped the spade on it. The noises did not stop, but they did subside, become distanced.

Terrified and baffled, she fled into the bungalow. Fingers laced so tightly that the bones ached, shoulders hunched, she waited in the hall. The front door had a pebbled-glass porthole, allowing her the distorted vision of a melting, wavering Les Marshall fumbling at the gate.

Go away! she screamed, though not aloud. And he did, in the sense that he was no longer visible. She waited until her lungs protested, remembered to breathe again, and waited and waited. Eventually, forcing her hands to relax, she opened the door a crack.

Marshall could be seen on his hands and knees through the sunburst spokes of the iron gate. He seemed to be crawling back toward his house. The side of his face was wetly red.

Peggy shut the door and snicked the lock home, praying he would not hear. Now she'd done it! She had done something to him, something to do with the spade and the branch and the fence and the corks hammered clear. Pale, shaken, lips and nostrils pinched with dread, she went out to the patio. Leaves on a flagstone marked the spot where she had done—whatever it was.

She grasped the battered end of the branch and tugged. It was wedged, but she levered and worried at it, gained a firm hold, set her toes against the base of the fence, and leaned back. Suddenly

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it came free and she sat down with a bump. The other end of the wood was fang-shaped and damply stained.

The Detective Inspector asked, "Now you're quite sure you never saw any callers next door, Miss Ipswich?" Before answering himself, "But how could you, being such a devoted gardener?"

It was her fourth encounter with the police in as many days. Despite the delay involved, she had managed to mow all the lawns—late in the year, it might be the last cut of the season—cleared away many dead plants, and kept a bonfire smoldering. She had dug out the worst-damaged tree and transplanted a small hydrangea. Probably it would die, it looked unhappy. The Inspector, no gardener, found nothing odd in a single bush among so many ornamental trees dotting the shaven lawns.

"We didn't get on," Peggy explained, as she had done from the start. "The Marshalls weren't neighborly, we hardly spoke."

He nodded, hardly listening. It didn't surprise him that she didn't know Marshall's common-law wife had left him weeks before. Your typical old lady, spry as a sparrow but sadly free of the traditional nosiness. Marking time, he sniffed loudly and murmured, "Creosote, love that smell."

"Once every two years, else the wood perishes." Peggy worked the brush around another knothole in the fence. "But you have to be careful—if it drips on the patio, the stains never come out."

"I daresay you spend every daylight hour out here, weather permitting," the policeman said.

"Just about. Callers for Mr. Marshall, they'd be out the front. Frankly, I never knew when he was at home, even. He worked irregular hours."

The Inspector snorted. "Didn't work at all, not to say at a steady job." He bit back the rest of the comment: Need To Know and all that. Searching Number Six had been a challenge, since a man alone with a gang of kids had let it degenerate into a tip. All the same, there'd been traces of recreational drugs, as the saying went. Lots of traces, and if only they could find the common-law wife they might establish whether the house had sheltered one user or more. Even a pair of users hardly accounted for the forensic evidence. The Inspector believed that Marshall had been dealing, either as a trade or to support his habit.

The kids were no help—sulky, obscurely scared little brutes. Poor old Miss Ipswich would be mortified if she knew that the children

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had—until sharply reprimanded—tried to sell the police the idea that she must have killed their father, foster father, whatever he'd been to them. Only youngsters, and rather unpleasant brats at that, could evolve such a theory. Marshall had been a big fellow, six-feet-two and change, slack-bellied but powerful. Miss Ipswich was elderly, trim but relatively frail, and might achieve five-feet-nothing on tiptoe. The weapon was still missing, but the stab into and past the eyesocket had been delivered with great power, on a level track. If anything, the pathologist reckoned, slightly downward.

Peggy straightened and, hands at the small of her back, surveyed progress. "We didn't get on," she repeated thoughtfully. "Er, did he—was there much suffering? Did he—*linger?*"

"Don't you worry about that, he was dead before he knew it," the policeman lied. Marshall had lasted quite a while, but the snag was that he'd done so out of sight and earshot of witnesses. Marshall's phone had been cut off and Miss Ipswich didn't have one. After being attacked, Marshall had obviously set off to get help, collapsing at the side of the road where the lunchtime-delivery postman had found him long after the event.

"I'm glad he didn't suffer." Peggy was still worried, however. "What about those children?"

Bless her kind heart, thought the Inspector. "Oh, they're in council care until we find the mother. If we ever do. Between ourselves, I believe she doesn't want to be found. And no wonder—they're no prize package."

Peggy didn't respond to that. Instead she pointed out, "Not all the children are hers, you know. Some are his by a previous marriage, or so I understand. It's all a muddle, isn't it?" And she sighed.

The Inspector was reassuring, dismissive. "That's what orphanages are for, Miss Ipswich. They'll be cared for, there's no question of them being turned out on the street. After all, they can't come back next door, now, can they?"

Peggy dipped the brush into the creosote, biting the inside of her cheek. "I'm very glad of that," she said. "Very glad."

Nice old girl, the Inspector told himself. Wretched kids slandering her in that irresponsible, luridly fantastic fashion, and here their welfare was the main concern with her. "Very, very glad," Peggy mused in time with her brush strokes. And the Inspector, putting his virgin notebook away, was unaware of proving that a listener and a speaker can share the same set of words while dealing with wholly different meanings.

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The new masterpiece of heroic fantasy reaches its heartstopping conclusion

A DARKNESS AT SETHANON

VOLUME IV IN THE RIFTWAR SAGA

BY

RAYMOND E. FEIST

The final battle between Order and Chaos is about to begin. Dark legions have risen up to crush the Kingdom of the Isles—and Pug, the Master Magician, must undertake an awesome and perilous quest to the dawn of time to grapple with an ancient and terrible enemy for the gate of a thousand worlds.

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a *NEW* short story by

DAN CRAWFORD

"I know what Wilder'll do," Debbie moped. "He'll have the auction rigged so his pals buy up everything, then he'll reopen. The girls won't have anywhere else to go. He'll send them out to work the streets, too, like they were just anybody." Debbie didn't approve of women working outside the house.

A brightly conceived and rendered story by Dan Crawford, 29 years old at the time of its writing, who has been published in Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine *and is the author of "Our College Home," a history of Upper Iowa University. He does free-lance indexing, having assisted most recently with the Index to Dr. Helen H. Tanner's* Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*— "very suitable," he says, "for Christmas giving, available from the University of Oklahoma." He now and again reviews non-fiction for* The Armchair Detective.

If you're confused by the clever title, we're not talking card games here, folks. If you're still confused by it after reading the story, look up the noun "club" in your dictionary. In our Webster's Seventh New Collegiate, *it's definition 3c . . .*

A DOUBLE RUN IN CLUBS

by DAN CRAWFORD

I had been out of town for a while. Not long enough for the statute of limitations to run out, but long enough, I hoped, that certain industrious police detectives would have found other names and faces to remember.

Thus I was surprised, and not unduly pleased, when, as I mean-

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dered through one of the more haunted of my old haunts, I heard a voice cry, "Why, it's Godfrey!"

I looked around, and then up. Much of Debbie was protruding from a second-story window. There is much of Debbie. She was born with a double chin and never saw fit to interfere with nature. "Come on in!" she called. "The drinks are on me!"

The old neighborhood had changed more than I'd thought. This was utterly unprecedented, and I said so as she unlocked the front door for me.

She kissed me on both cheeks and then relocked the front door. "I refuse to leave any of the good stuff in the cellar," she said. "Why should *they* have it?"

"They?" I asked. "The girls nipping into your private stock again?"

"No, the bidders at the auction," she said, pushing me toward the parlor. "If any."

"Auction?" I said, choosing a spot on the velvet loveseat. "Don't you usually sell your franchise outright? Get something extra for the good will?"

"*Bad* will, this time," she told me, opening a bottle and eyeing the contents. "And I need cash money fast."

She didn't have to force the glass into my hand. "I thought you were too smart to get in spots like this," I said, sniffing to be sure this wasn't the watered stuff she saved for customers.

"So did I," she complained, sitting down across from me. "I was taking care of business. We made so much on Wrestling Nights, I figured on expanding. I got good rates, but Wilder, who handled the bank end, figured he was entitled to special service around here."

I shrugged. "That's not unusual."

"No, but he is." She took a big swallow and refilled her glass. "He all but killed Jody one night." You don't know Jody—she's after your time. So I barred him. And that's when things started to go wrong."

"Debbie, Debbie," I sighed, shaking my head, "I thought you knew how to read the fine print."

"There's people can read it better," she replied. "Unless I get money fast, I'm in deep trouble."

I wasn't in any position to make a large loan, so I urged philosophy. "You've been down before."

"Not this far," she said, gloomily considering the bottom of her glass. When I said nothing more, she glanced up. "I'll come around—I always do. But I can't do it with company. I may have to throw off

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the girls. It goes against my grain, though. I always took care of the girls—you know that."

Debbie was always an excellent mother hen, provided the chicks didn't mind handing over fifty percent of the cracked corn and caterpillars.

"I know what Wilder'll do," she moped. "He'll have the auction rigged so his pals buy up everything. Then he'll reopen. The girls won't have anywhere else to go. He'll send them out to work the streets, too, like they were just anybody." Debbie does not approve of women working outside the house.

I said nothing.

This wasn't the reply she wanted. "Do you think I called you in here just to help me empty the cellar?" she demanded. "Give me an idea!"

I looked her over with, I think, more sorrow than censure. "Give?" I said.

She threw up her hands. "*Sell* me an idea, then!" she cried.

I wondered if I had any. I took another sip and then looked across the top of the glass at Debbie. "Will you see this Wilder before the auction?"

She scoffed. "He comes in every day," she told me. "Brings me the day's menu from the jail so I'll know what I'm getting into."

"Oh, that's nice," I said. "Has he been by today?"

She shook her head. "Not that I don't trust you, Godfrey," she said, "but how much will this cost me?"

I raised my hands, palms out. "This one's free unless you're completely satisfied," I told her. "I'll take two percent of the auction proceeds after the first ten thousand."

"The *first* ten thousand?" she demanded. "There isn't going to be any ten thousand!"

I patted her pudgy hand. "There, there," I told her. "You have someone keep an eye out for your financial friend and I'll tell you what I need. I'm much too good-looking right now for what I have to do."

She looked me over. "Nah," she said.

Despite this, when Mr. Wilder appeared around a corner, whistling to himself, a greyed, seedy gent wearing a jacket from Debbie's lost-and-found was being forcibly ejected. "No!" Debbie snapped. "You can come to the sale like everybody else! It starts at ten tomorrow—now, get lost!"

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The old duffer shuffled away, growling vile, obscene, and entirely deserved things about the inhabitants of the building.

"A disappointed customer?" Mr. Wilder asked Debbie.

"Oh, some crackpot," she sniffed, turning away. "He's got this idea—" I was shuffling too fast and didn't hear the rest. I was in a hurry to be elsewhere. The blasted jacket hadn't been cleaned since Eisenhower was in Paris.

I got something from my own tatty wardrobe to wear to the auction. The big old warehouse being used, out back of Debbie's establishment, was packed with the good and the true, hoping for a glimpse into the lifestyles of the rich and sleazy. Several of them had already had a glimpse, and more than a glimpse, but couldn't let on in the presence of spouses and children.

For all the mob, bidding was sparse. The auctioneer got minimum bids or less for the first few sticks of furniture he offered up, and it didn't seem to me that he was very surprised.

"Boy," one woman said as the velvet loveseat was knocked down for twenty dollars. "If that could only talk!"

A few people made walleyed glances in my direction. I liked that. One of the brave ones, a tall man whose remnants of hair were blond and curly, edged over.

"I hear you're Doctor Guerrero," he said.

I nodded and didn't look at him. My eyes were only for staring at the auctioneer.

"I must have eaten too much, Doc," he said. "Or else it's the heat. I hurt right over—"

"Not a medical doctor," I snapped, cutting him off. I still didn't look at him. He was impressed.

"I know," he answered, his voice lower. He cleared his throat. "Is it true what I hear, Dr. Guerrero—that you can make mirrors replay what's been reflected in them in the past?"

I shrugged in an irritated way, like a man trying to get rid of a fly. "No, please," he persisted. "It sounds really, er, interesting. I have some friends who might lend a little, uh, financial support. Can you come talk to them?"

For his generosity, he got a cold bow and a colder smile. "Thank you so very much," I said. "Where were you when I was struggling? What I need now is not money, but mirrors." I took no interest in an end table, which sold for the price of a good paperback book.

My would-be backer entered the crowd, but returned with an even

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larger, balder buddy. "My friend Knight here has been telling me some interesting things," he said. "How does your machinery work, Doctor Guerrero?"

This time I didn't look at either of them. "It's beyond you," I informed them, in a voice they had to lean forward to hear. "They laughed at me in the patent office. We'll see if they laugh when they see my films."

"Films?" demanded Knight and his buddy in chorus.

"The mirrors will only play once," I answered with a shrug, "then the memory is erased. But if I film the memory as it unfolds, then I have proof."

Knight and his companion exchanged glances. "But why *these* mirrors, particularly?" Knight asked me.

I raised my hands to indicate a pretty large trout. "I need big mirrors, strong mirrors," I explained. "The current's too much for hand mirrors—breaks the glass, ruins the image. And I need plenty of mirrors—to experiment, to find out the best lighting, the best angle, what speed film to use. Physics I know, a photographer I'm not."

Knight licked his lips. "Um, Dawson here owns a furniture store," he said. "He could, ah, give you a good bulk deal on mirrors."

I shook my head and turned away. "What would a new mirror have to play?" I demanded. "Even a floor sample. These mirrors have been used. I made the idiot woman a proposition before, but now I have to buy them all piecemeal." I growled obscenities in a language he couldn't translate because I had invented it on the spot.

"Er, very interesting," said Dawson. "Um. Been nice talking to you. Sorry we couldn't help you any." He and Knight disappeared into the crowd to confirm several people's worst fears.

Bidding picked up a bit when the first mirrors from the mirrored shower stalls started to turn up. I bid, just to keep people interested, but I didn't let the totals go much beyond three figures. These wouldn't have been much use to Dr. Guerrero, anyway—they'd have been all steamed up.

Debbie had started to look a bit more cheerful, but optimism *really* returned when the mirror ceilings came out. A hundred became a thousand with just a few flips of our bidder cards, and a thousand didn't take very long to become ten.

"Sold!" cried the auctioneer, "to number thirty-three!"

I had to check my card to be positive. *I* was number thirty-three. Those peapods had actually let Dr. Guerrero get away with one! The

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final bid on that first mirror was a little more than I had been clearing so far that decade, over and above expenses, and Debbie's smile grew a tad lopsided. But I kept my eyes pointed at the stage, preparing to bid on the next mirror.

My nonchalance was justified. While they were still hauling off the first mirror, a whiskered gentleman came up and offered me double if *he* could have the mirror instead. Dr. Guerrero allowed this, with no good grace, provided the man paid in advance. He did this. I was not surprised.

You see, no one had any way of knowing which mirror had been in which room, so each bidder had not only an interest in keeping the mirrors away from me but away from each other, in case one of their rivals had access to my fiendish device. Ceiling mirrors set record prices that day. Even when they were attached to ceilings, they had never been higher.

Bidding hysteria set in. Bedroom dressers with merely moderate mirrors sold for prices generally reserved for condominiums in the yuppie part of town. Debbie put up her compact as a joke. They sold it for six hundred dollars. Her office desk, which just happened to have a shiny top, was boosted an extra thousand dollars when Dr. Guerrero showed an interest in it.

The only depressing note was that Wilder himself was separated from none of his money. He was in there bidding with the rest of them, but he could never come out on top.

"I suppose the money is more important than revenge," I said, collecting my cut. "He'll get his for allowing this auction to happen in the first place."

"Well, you're the doctor," said Debbie, turning over the money with no more than a rueful glance.

There was plenty of money to square her with her creditors. Each of the girls got enough to make a fresh start. Whether they did, I couldn't say. I can't be everywhere.

Debbie retired, but now she's thinking of going into politics, a separate branch of the old profession. She reports no further trouble with the moneyed section of town, except that she gets about one phone call a week from people asking for Dr. Guerrero's address.

"If you were a real doctor, now," she tells me, "you'd be a millionaire today."

If only I'd listened to my mother in my youth.

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a *NEW* Captain Leopold story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

Leopold was driving, with Molly at his side, and as he rounded the corner of one tree-lined lane he noticed for the first time that the motorcycle escort was wearing a holstered revolver on his belt. Although the escorts' uniforms resembled those of the police, they were really private guards supplied by a security service hired by the funeral director. Leopold knew these guards sometimes carried actual weapons or non-firing replicas, but it wasn't customary for them to be armed while escorting funerals.

A Leopold story we think will be one of the most memorable in this popular, enduring series . . .

LEOPOLD AND THE CEMETERY BANDITS

by EDWARD D. HOCH

The three days between Judge Cross's funeral on Wednesday morning and Lieutenant Mannerd's retirement party on Friday night were like no other three days Leopold had ever known.

It started with the funeral. Leonard Cross was a former Federal Court judge both Captain Leopold and his wife Molly had known for years. Throat cancer had forced his early retirement from the bench at age sixty-one and he'd died less than a year later. Leopold and Molly had paid their respects to his widow Margaret at the funeral parlor the previous evening and now, on a cool but sunny September morning, they were following the funeral procession down the winding road to a secluded corner of Willowmont Cemetery that would be the judge's final resting place. No one else from the Police De-

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partment had attended the funeral, though Leopold recognized Judge Ritter and several others from the legal profession.

Leopold was driving, with Molly at his side, and as he rounded the corner of one tree-lined lane he noticed for the first time that the motorcycle escort was wearing a holstered revolver on his belt. Although the escorts' uniforms resembled those of the police, they were really private guards supplied by a security service hired by the funeral director. Leopold knew these guards sometimes carried actual weapons or non-firing replicas, but it wasn't customary for them to be armed while escorting funerals.

Up ahead, the hearse came to a halt beside a shady knoll. Leopold could see the Cross family monument about halfway up the hillside. He slowed the car to a stop and prepared to get out. "Margaret seems to be holding up well," Molly commented. "It's been a terrible year for her."

"For them both," Leopold agreed. He slid out from behind the wheel and closed the door behind him, then walked around to Molly's side and helped her out. All down the line of cars, people were leaving their cars and starting up the hill. The six pallbearers, who'd driven their own cars, were hurrying forward to help with the casket.

That was when Leopold saw the tall slender man in the blue suit step from behind the monument on the hillside. He wore dark glasses and carried an Uzi submachine gun. Leopold turned to the motorcycle escort and saw that he had drawn his revolver. From a stand of evergreens, two more men emerged, one carrying an automatic shotgun and the other a pistol.

The man with the Uzi spoke in a loud, commanding voice. "Everyone stay right where you are and nobody gets hurt. We don't want to hurt anyone. This is a robbery. One of my men is going to pass among you with a bag. I want you to toss in your wallets, purses, rings, jewelry, and anything else of value. Nobody tries anything funny, nobody gets hurt."

Leopold instinctively reached for the snub-nosed .38 in his belt holster. Molly's hand shot out to cover his. "Don't be foolish!" she whispered.

The uniformed man from the motorcycle caught the movement and walked over to Leopold, his own gun steady in his hand. "What's this we got?" he asked, flipping open Leopold's coat. He took the revolver and tossed it far up the hillside into an unmowed area of tall grass.

Leopold made a move forward and the man's gloved left hand shot

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up, catching him with a backhanded blow to the jaw. "Don't try that again, Pop, or you're a dead man!"

Leopold managed to control his anger as one of the other gunmen produced a green-plastic trash bag and started down the line of mourners. He kept hoping another funeral procession or a cemetery work crew might appear over the crest of the hill, but they were in a remote area well shielded by trees and when a car did appear, it proved to be the minister arriving to lead the graveside prayers. He was quickly placed in line with the others.

The man on the hillside with the submachine gun watched his cohort collecting wallets and jewelry, and when he reached the end of the line he shouted down to him, "No one gets a free ride here—open up the coffin and see if the dead man has any rings."

"*No!*" Margaret Cross cried, breaking free of the line. "Don't do this!"

The motorcycle gunman shoved her back roughly while the man with the shotgun aimed his weapon at the funeral director. "You heard him—open it up."

"This is obscene!"

The man moved close enough to jab the shotgun into the funeral director's ribs. "Open it or we'll be burying you along with him!"

Leopold, watching from halfway down the line, squinted into the morning sunlight. The other three were complete strangers to him, but the man with the shotgun now looked vaguely familiar.

When the funeral director had reluctantly unscrewed the heavy bronze lid of the coffin, Cross's widow let out a cry of desperation. "Not his wedding ring, for God's sake!" The man with the shotgun poked her in the stomach and she doubled over in agony. Several men hurried to her side as the man with the rifle took the bag from the other man and went to the open coffin.

"We're almost finished now," the gunman on the hillside proclaimed, holding the Uzi level. "It would be a shame for anyone to get killed now."

The uniformed man mounted his motorcycle and waited for the plastic bag. As he roared away, the other three started backing up the hill, their guns trained on the mourners. The man with the submachine gun said, "You've been very cooperative, folks. Just one more thing—everyone lie down on the grass. That's right, on your stomachs. I want you to stay there to a nice slow count of one hundred."

Leopold, Molly, and the others obeyed him. When Leopold looked

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up a few seconds later, the men were disappearing into the woods. "Damn," he muttered, getting to his feet, "now I've seen everything." He ran to the front seat of the car and flipped on the police radio. It would be too late, he knew. The motorcycle would have cleared the front gate already, and the three men on foot would have made it down the other side of the hill to a back road outside the cemetery grounds. "See how Margaret is," he told Molly. "Tell me if we need an ambulance."

He called in the report and asked for help. Margaret Cross was standing and walking around, apparently all right, as Molly and others tried to comfort her. Everyone was in a rage. The minister finally calmed them down with the suggestion that the graveside ceremony proceed.

But by that time the first squad car had arrived and Leopold walked up the hill to search for his gun in the tall grass.

Sergeant Fletcher was waiting when he returned to the office. "Held up at a funeral, Captain? Is it true?"

"It's true, and there's nothing funny about it." Leopold sat down at his desk, scanning the morning reports without really seeing them. "Bring me the book of mug shots for armed robbery, will you, Fletcher?"

"Think you made any of them?"

"I'm not sure. One looked familiar."

"I hear they even robbed the corpse."

Leopold nodded. "A hell of a way for Judge Cross to end his days."

"Maybe that was part of the idea—to humiliate him even in his coffin. Maybe these guys were sentenced by him."

"It's a possibility," Leopold agreed.

Fletcher went off for the mug shots and Leopold sat quietly at his desk for a time. That was how Sergeant Connie Trent found him when she entered the office five minutes later. "Daydreaming, Captain?"

"Just thinking, Connie."

"I heard about this morning. It must have been terrible."

"For Margaret Cross it was, I'm sure of that."

Connie was carrying a metal box and a list of names. "Are you and Molly going to Gus Mannerd's retirement party Friday night?"

"I suppose so." Lieutenant Mannerd had been a casual friend of his for years. As head of the Swindle and Embezzlement Squad, he had little official contact with Leopold's Violent Crimes Squad but

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Leopold had always liked him. The fact that he was retiring at fifty-nine, a few years younger than Leopold was, gave Leopold pause. Even though his life with Molly was a happy one, he had never been able to imagine himself retired. What would they do—travel to Florida every winter and to Cape Cod every summer? Molly could never do that. She had her own law practice to consider.

"Do you want to pay for the tickets now?" Connie asked.

"Sure. How much?"

"Twenty-two dollars each—that includes the buffet dinner and two hours of open bar, plus something toward the gift."

He wrote out a check for forty-four dollars, hoping that Molly was remembering to keep Friday night clear. "Here you are, Connie. We're looking forward to it."

"Thanks, Captain." She went out to the squad room and he saw her intercept Fletcher as he returned with the mug shots.

"Look through these a while," he told Leopold. "I have to pay Connie for the party."

Leopold flipped quickly through the loose-leaf pages of mug shots. Some reminded him of old cases, old triumphs. Others brought back painful memories of unfinished business. God, how could he ever retire with so much left undone?

Raymond Delgado.

Leopold stared hard at the photograph, remembering the man with the shotgun who'd struck Margaret Cross.

Raymond Delgado.

It just might be him.

Delgado had been serving a two-to-five-year term for armed robbery in the State Prison, but he should have been paroled by now. "Check on this one," he told Fletcher. "See if he's still in the slammer."

Next he turned his attention to the list of victims from the morning's robbery. There had been seventy-seven people in the funeral procession, counting the minister and the funeral director. The victims estimated they'd been robbed of somewhere between $3,500 and $4,000 in cash, plus jewelry valued at another $5,000 to $6,000.

He thought about that, writing the figures down and doodling around them. Four armed men pulling off a spectacular robbery at great risk—and netting less than ten thousand dollars total. Did it make any sense?

Of course, some of the wallets would have contained credit cards and other items of value. Still—

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Fletcher came back. "I couldn't find the file, so I phoned the State Prison." He shuffled through the papers in his hand. "Raymond Delgado was paroled three months ago. They have an address for him out on North Road."

"Go out and talk to him, Fletcher. If he doesn't have an alibi for this morning, bring him in and give me a call. I'll be at home."

"Right, Captain."

Before he could leave for home, Leopold was surprised by a visit from Chief of Police Andrew Kent. He hadn't seen Chief Kent in the squad room in weeks, and the sight of his tall, grey-haired figure looming in the doorway surprised him. "Hello, Chief."

"Leopold, that was a real mess at the cemetery this morning. The evening papers are full of it. I hope your squad is on top of it."

"We're following a few leads."

"Good." He started to leave and then came to the point of his visit. "Leopold, I'm new in this position. You've known someone like Gus Mannerd a good deal longer than I have. Could you write me a few lines about him—something personal, maybe a bit humorous—that I could include in my speech Friday night?"

"I'll see what I can do," Leopold promised with a straight face.

He drove home, surprising Molly by arriving before six. She greeted him with a kiss. "I thought you'd be there all night after what happened."

"I may have to go in again if Fletcher calls."

"Did your people talk to everyone?"

He nodded. "All seventy-seven. None of them recognized any of the holdup men. No one could contribute anything beyond what you and I saw ourselves."

She followed him to his favorite chair and stood behind him for a moment, rubbing his shoulders. "You're letting this get you down. You're upset by it."

"Of course I'm upset by it. You shouldn't have stopped me from drawing my weapon, Molly."

"I didn't want you dead. I didn't want any of us dead."

"Still—"

"The one with the motorcycle called you Pop. That's what got to you, isn't it?"

"He was right, Molly. A man younger than I am is retiring from the force Friday night. Why do I hang on?"

"Because it's your life," she said simply.

She fixed a light supper and they ate in virtual silence. When the

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phone rang shortly after seven, it was a relief for them both. "It's just me," Fletcher said, "reporting in."

"Did you find him?"

"He's not home, or at least he doesn't answer my ring. There's something funny going on, though. Some guy in a car across the street seems to be watching the place. Maybe you should take a ride out."

"Good idea," Leopold agreed. "I'll be there in ten minutes."

He told Molly he'd try to be back early. "Be careful," she said, as she had so many times before.

Fletcher was waiting at a neighborhood bar down the street from Delgado's address. "The car's still there," he told Leopold. "See it across the street?"

"I see it."

This area of North Road was a neighborhood of light manufacturing, working-class homes, and older apartment buildings. It was almost at the city's edge, a bit shabby and in need of renewal. The car Fletcher indicated was several years old, a yellow sedan that had the look of having been poorly repainted sometime in its past.

"Let's take a walk by," Leopold suggested.

They strolled casually out of the bar, like two friends who'd paused on their way home for a drink or two. When they were abreast of the car, Leopold bent over as if to tie his shoe. The driver immediately started the engine, but Leopold was too fast for him. He yanked open the door, his revolver aimed at the man's head. "Climb out of there, you're under arrest!"

"What the hell—"

"Out! Frisk him, Fletcher, while I read him his rights. The last time I saw this bird he was riding a motorcycle and calling me Pop."

The man carried identification giving his name as Doug Foley. Without his uniform, he seemed slighter and not half as intimidating. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. "I wasn't at no cemetery!"

"Who mentioned a cemetery? What are you doing here?"

"Waiting for a friend."

"Name of Raymond Delgado?"

Foley's eyes flickered but he said nothing. Fletcher flipped open the glove compartment and found a familiar-looking revolver nestled inside. "Is this the weapon he had this morning, Captain?"

"It looks like it."

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"That's an illegal search!" Foley complained, straining against his handcuffs.

"Not when there's probable cause to believe a felony has been committed. I've positively identified you as one of the cemetery bandits. What's more, we arrested you across the street from the residence of another suspect, Raymond Delgado."

"I don't know him. Never heard of him."

The streetlights came on as darkness fell and suddenly a light was turned on in Delgado's apartment. "Maybe he slipped in the back way," Leopold decided. "Stay here with our prisoner, Fletcher, while I take a look."

Delgado occupied the ground floor of the house, a grimy pre-war dwelling badly in need of a paint job. A wide porch ran across the front of the house and Leopold could imagine a hammock or rocking chair on it in the days when it was a comfortable, one-family dwelling. When there was no answer to his ring, he walked across the porch and peered in through the curtains at the lighted floor lamp. He spotted the timer that had turned it on.

Then he saw the body on the floor.

He broke the window in the locked front door with his pistol and reached in to open the door. Entering carefully, he turned on lights and quickly searched the place to make certain he was alone, then he checked the back door, which led to a yard with a little alley at the rear. Only then did he return to the body. The head wound had already told him the man was dead.

He turned the body over enough to see the face. Raymond Delgado, the man with the shotgun. Leopold phoned it in, requesting the full homicide crew, then went outside to tell Fletcher.

It was nearly midnight by the time Doug Foley's lawyer arrived at Headquarters. He was a familiar figure around the squad room and the courthouse, a rumpled little man named Cal Sedges, who could often be found defending known criminals and mob figures. Sedges took it all in stride, saying that their money was as good as the next guy's and they usually had plenty of it. He'd argued more than one case before Judge Cross, and Leopold had half expected to see him at the funeral.

"Hope we didn't get you up, Cal," Leopold greeted him.

The little man was all business. "What are the charges against my client?"

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"Armed robbery, assault. By tomorrow we may add homicide if he doesn't start talking."

"I'll have him out of here by tomorrow," Sedges assured him.

The next day dawned to a chill September rain. Molly made breakfast before they set out for their respective offices. "Do you really think Foley killed Delgado? she asked.

"I doubt it. Killers don't hang around across the street in parked cars. Sedges will probably have him out on bail today just as he promised."

The morning paper ran another banner headline about the cemetery bandits, with the murder making it that much more sensational. As he walked down the hall to his squad room, Gus Mannerd called out to Leopold. "You do get the headlines, Captain."

"I get the grief, too, when we don't solve them."

Fletcher was already at his desk. "I've got a surprise for you, Captain."

"Good or bad?"

"Good, for once. Foley wants to talk."

"Let's go!"

"We gotta wait for Sedges. He wants his lawyer present."

"Sedges will probably talk him out of it."

"I doubt it. He's really scared about Delgado getting killed. He thinks if Sedges springs him he'll be next."

Leopold shook his head, not comprehending. "This isn't the Brinks robbery. They only got ten thousand dollars at best!"

"Maybe he'll make everything clear."

Connie Trent came in with a cup of coffee. "Want anything from the machine? I just made it fresh."

Leopold sat on the edge of Fletcher's desk. "No thanks, Connie. How many have you got for Mannerd's retirement?"

"Close to two hundred. I think everyone's ready for a party."

"Mannerd sure will be," Fletcher said with a smile. "He started clearing out his office a week ago. He wanted me to help him clear out a bookcase last night but I told him I was on my way out to North Road. This morning he's still at work on the same bookcase."

Cal Sedges arrived and he, Foley, Fletcher, and Leopold adjourned to one of the interrogation rooms. Sedges, nervously rubbing the bald spot on the top of his head, spoke quickly with his client. "You realize what you're doing by making a statement? I could get you

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a plea bargain at the very least. Let me get someone over here from the D.A.'s office."

"The hell with that," Foley said. "I'm safer in a cell than on the streets. And this cop nailed me, anyway."

"We'd like to videotape your statement," Leopold said. "Is that agreeable?"

"Sure. Go ahead."

He prefaced his statement with the usual formality that he was making it of his own free will. Then, in response to Leopold's questions, the story began to emerge. "Delgado phoned me on Monday and said he needed a couple of guys for an easy job—ten thousand each, guaranteed, maybe more. I suggested Tommy Linger and the two of us met him at a bar Monday night."

"Give us Linger's address and the name of the bar," Fletcher interrupted.

When Foley resumed, he said, "Delgado needed four guys to hold up a funeral at Willowmont Cemetery. I thought he was kidding at first, I'd never heard of anything so crazy. He said there was him and a dude named Sam Oclatt and they needed two more. He thought of me because he remembered I rode a motorcycle."

"Oclatt's address?" Fletcher said.

"You got me. Yesterday was the only time I ever seen him, and I spoke maybe ten words to him. He was the one with the Uzi."

"Go on," said Leopold.

"The deal was that we rob everybody and divvy up the loot. Delgado guaranteed us the ten grand apiece."

"Why would he do that?"

"Beats me. The funeral was for some judge. Maybe Delgado had a grudge against him. Anyway, the thing went off like clockwork, only there wasn't much money. A few grand each, counting the jewelry. I was supposed to meet Delgado at his place last night for the rest of my share. That's where you found me."

"Who do you think killed him?"

"Sam Oclatt, I suppose. Who else?"

"Maybe you."

"I wouldn't have been hanging around, would I?"

They questioned him for another twenty minutes, then gave up on it. The story was straightforward enough, but it seemed to Leopold that the most important part was missing.

Before noon, Fletcher had picked up Tommy Linger, who Leopold quickly identified as the one who'd walked down the line with the

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trash bag, but Linger could add nothing. He hadn't even known Sam Oclatt's name, nor Delgado's either. They'd only been Sam and Ray to him.

After lunch, Leopold had an idea. "I'm going out to visit Margaret Cross," he told Fletcher.

"Want me along?"

"No. Keep working on the Oclatt angle. If it's not his real name, it might be a known alias."

He phoned first, and Margaret was watching for him when he turned into her driveway. Up close, she had a handsome, almost aristocratic face, with high cheekbones and a slim, tapering nose.

"Won't you sit down, Captain?"

"Thank you, Margaret. I'm sorry to intrude, but it's about yesterday's robbery."

"I read in the morning paper that one of them was killed."

"That's right—the one who hit you. And we've arrested two others. Only the man with the submachine gun is still at large."

"Why did they do it, Captain? Did they hate Leonard that much?"

"That's one of the possibilities we're considering, but I have to look into other angles as well. Someone was prepared, apparently, to pay up to forty thousand dollars to make sure this crime came off. That's a great deal of money with very little return. Unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless the holdup was merely a blind for something else."

"What do you mean?"

Leopold leaned forward in his chair. "Margaret, was there something hidden inside your husband's coffin?"

Her face went white and he thought she was about to faint. "How much do you know?" she asked, gripping the arm of her chair.

Leopold got her a glass of water, and when she'd had a chance to compose herself he said, "It was mostly a guess, but there was a false note about the opening of the coffin. No gang of professional holdup men would take the time to unscrew a coffin lid on the off-chance the corpse might be wearing a valuable ring, not when they might be discovered at any moment. And no gang of professionals would undertake a robbery with so little to gain. Someone had to guarantee them forty thousand dollars to do it, and what did that person hope to gain? It had to be something hidden in your husband's coffin, something the man stole while pretending to take the ring. Am I right?"

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"I don't know. After he hit me, I didn't notice much that happened."

"But you placed something in the coffin?"

"Leonard was a good man all his life. You have to believe that."

Leopold nodded encouragingly.

"When the cancer got so bad he could no longer speak, he started keeping some sort of diary or journal. He wrote in it every day, but he'd never let me see it. I thought it might be a journal of his illness, a record of his dying—"

"You never glimpsed even a page?"

"Not really. Once when I brought him a glass of orange juice, I saw a column of numbers, but it meant nothing to me. There was a lock on the book, like a teenager's diary, and he always locked it when he wasn't writing in it. Last week, when he realized death was only days away, he gave me the locked book with a note that said, 'Bury this with me.' And so I slipped it into the coffin yesterday morning."

"Without reading it?"

"I had no key. I would have had to break the lock—and what for? To find some petty account of adultery or chicanery that would have clouded my memory of the man I loved? I did what he asked me to do."

"Why not tell you to burn the book? Why did he want it buried with him?"

"I suppose that went with Leonard's personality. He was never a man to act with finality, to perform some action that couldn't be reconsidered and changed. You probably think that's an odd attitude for a judge to have, but it worked quite well for him. He'd been known to reverse himself, to shorten a prisoner's sentence if further evidence came along. I think he did want the book buried, but liked the idea that it could be dug up again someday if necessary."

"Did you tell anyone about the journal?"

"No. Not a living soul until now."

"But if the robbers were after it, how would they know it existed? And that it was in the coffin with him?"

"I can't answer that. Perhaps you're leaping to a conclusion. Leonard's journal might have nothing to do with the robbery. It could be still in the coffin where I put it."

"I'm afraid there's only one way we can be sure about that," Leopold said.

It was late afternoon before Judge Ritter agreed to sign the order

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Leopold requested. "Run that by me again, Captain. Just why do you need to exhume Leonard Cross's body?"

"His wife has told me of a journal or diary she placed in the coffin at her husband's request. If it's missing, it might provide the real motive for that robbery yesterday."

The judge picked up his pen. "Anything I can do to bring those bastards to justice."

On the ride out to the cemetery, Lieutenant Fletcher reported to Leopold. "I can't find a thing in the files on Sam Oclatt, Captain. He might have come in from out of town."

"Did you check with the F.B.I.?"

"I've got a request in to them now. With luck, we'll hear something by tomorrow."

The superintendent of Willowmont Cemetery had been alerted by Leopold's call. Though it was the dinner hour, he was waiting with a pair of gravediggers. "You're in luck," he said as he studied the order signed by Judge Ritter. "We hadn't finished filling in the grave. It'll only take a few minutes to raise the coffin."

Leopold peered into the open hole. The coffin had been covered by a few inches of dirt, but the rest was piled at the edge. "I thought it was usually filled the same day."

"Not always."

"Ever troubled by grave robbers?"

"Well, we have twenty-four-hour security guards who patrol the cemetery. They have to chase kids away once in a while. They keep special watch on unfilled graves like this one."

The coffin lid was unscrewed and raised and once more Leopold looked at the dead face of Judge Leonard Cross. There was no diary with him in the coffin.

"What does it prove?" Fletcher asked on the drive back. "That Delgado took it when the coffin was open?"

"Either that or Margaret Cross was lying about it."

Friday was the day of Gus Mannerd's retirement party. It was also the day they found Sam Oclatt.

"Shot to death in a car over on the west side," Fletcher told Leopold around ten in the morning. "It happened sometime during the night, but the body was just discovered. There's no identification, but the car is registered in Oclatt's name. Want to take a look and see if it's your man? They're bringing him in to the morgue."

"Let's go."

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Leopold recognized him at once, even without the sunglasses and the Uzi. He'd been shot once in the right temple at close range. "Someone he knew, sitting in the car next to him," Fletcher speculated. "He lives in New Haven. That's why we had no record of him locally. I was going to check car registrations next. We'd have found him."

"But not soon enough. Any sign of the diary?"

"None. But if it was stolen from the coffin, Delgado probably got it. You said he was the one poking around the body, right?"

"Right," Leopold agreed. "Let's go back to his apartment."

The Delgado place on North Road had remained sealed as a crime scene, untouched since Wednesday night. Fletcher went quickly through a few books without finding anything. It was Leopold who noticed the folded invoice on the kitchen table with the afternoon newspaper. *Fifty-seven book pages @ .10 each.* "Do you think he could have—?"

"Copied the thing? Could we be so lucky, Captain?"

They found it within minutes, stuffed in the drawer of the kitchen table, upside down so it looked like a sheaf of scrap paper. "Numbers, Fletcher. Pages of numbers."

"You think his killer got the book itself?"

"I've no doubt about it." Leopold turned to the beginning where there was some handwritten text. "Margaret Cross can identify this handwriting as her husband's. I'll take this back to the office where I can study it more carefully."

It took him most of the afternoon to read through the 114 pages, copied two each on fifty-seven sheets. He made notes as he went along, and finally summoned Fletcher in to outline what he'd found.

"It was something that happened seven years ago. Judge Cross must have been bothered by it ever since. Maybe it eased his conscience to write it all down before he died. A case came before him involving a white-collar criminal—a bank employee who'd rigged the computer to round off the pennies on the amount paid each month to interest-bearing accounts. The extra, several thousand dollars a month, was then transferred by computer to his account."

"I remember reading something about that," Fletcher said.

"Cross says that during the trial he was approached by someone—he doesn't say who, but I presume it was the defense attorney—and offered a most unusual bribe. The crime was a first offense, so he had great leeway in the sentencing. The bribe offered him was that if the convicted man was given probation instead of a prison

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term, and allowed to leave the state, regular wire transfers of small sums would begin to appear monthly in Judge Cross's bank account. The judge insists he never believed a word of it and dismissed the attempted bribe out of hand. Nevertheless, when the time came, he passed a sentence of five years' probation against Adam Sinclair, the man in question. Later he agreed that the probation could be served in Texas, where Sinclair had a brother who'd promised him a job."

"A job in a bank?"

Leopold smiled. "No, in a drugstore, as a matter of fact. That's why Judge Cross thought it odd when certain unexplained wire transfers began appearing on his bank statements. No single one was for more than a thousand dollars, but they appeared two or three times a month. His journal includes a careful record of each amount. During the first year they totaled nearly thirty thousand dollars."

"And he did nothing about it?" Fletcher asked, amazement showing on his face.

"He wrote in the journal that he went back to the man who'd originally contacted him with the bribe offer and told him he didn't want the money. The man said to forget it. He told Judge Cross that he was getting it, too. It seems this Sinclair's brother works for a bank in Texas and Sinclair told him how to work the computer scam down there. The judge and the other man and both brothers were all getting rich."

"Unbelievable!"

"Since Delgado made this copy of the judge's journal, I can only guess that he was planning some blackmail, either against the other man or against Margaret Cross."

Fletcher had been holding several file folders in his hand. "Now I've got a little surprise for you, Captain. While you were reading, I searched around Delgado's apartment some more. Look at these."

Leopold flipped through the folders. "These are from our files—police reports on Delgado and Oclatt!"

"Exactly. No wonder we had no record of Delgado's release from prison, and nothing at all on Oclatt."

"How did Delgado get these?"

"Beats me. They were stuck into a pile of old newspapers."

They were interrupted by the sudden arrival of Chief Kent, striding into the office with a half smoked cigar between his lips. "Leo-

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pold, do you have something about Gus Mannerd for my speech tonight?"

Leopold had completely forgotten the request. "Give me twenty minutes," he replied. "I'll bring it down to your office."

"Fine." Kent nodded to Fletcher and was gone.

Leopold sighed and rolled a sheet of blank paper into his typewriter. "I'd better leave you alone," Fletcher said.

Leopold looked up from the typewriter. "Check on something for me, will you? Go over to the Court House and look up the records of Adam Sinclair's trial before Judge Cross. Find out who the defense attorney was. Find out if it was Cal Sedges."

The retirement party was being held at the Shoreline, a restaurant and semi-private yacht club southeast of the city on Long Island Sound. Connie had arranged for the large back room, which easily accommodated the two hundred guests, most of whom were clustered at the open bar when Leopold and Molly arrived a little before seven o'clock.

"Congratulations, Gus," he said, shaking Mannerd's hand.

"You going to join me and get out of the rat race?"

"Any day now."

Mannerd's wife was at the far end of the bar and Leopold said hello to her, then moved on to greet some friends. Judge Ritter was there, and even Cal Sedges. Mannerd knew a great many people in town. Chief Kent made his way through the crush, trying to catch the bartender's eye. When his gaze lighted on Leopold, he tapped his breast pocket. "Good job—just what I needed!"

"Glad I could help."

When they were seated, the guests went up a table at a time to serve themselves from the buffet. On his way back to his table, Leopold spotted Fletcher and his wife across the room and managed a detour in that direction. "Find out anything at the Court House?" he asked Fletcher.

"Nothing you can use. That's why I didn't come right over. The defense attorney wasn't Sedges—it was that old guy Blankfort. Remember him? He died of a heart attack about three years ago."

Leopold shrugged. "Another good theory shot. Thanks, Fletcher."

After dinner came the speeches, with Chief Kent leading off. He opened with a joke and then used the lines of praise Leopold had written, tacking on a standard ending he'd probably used a dozen times before. "We'll miss Gus in the Department. We'll miss his

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cheerfulness and his determination. The people of this city were lucky to have a man like Gus Mannerd in public service all these years. Let's give him a big round of applause."

More speeches followed, and then the presentation of a color TV set and a plaque. Gus got up to say a few words of thanks. "You're a great bunch to have worked with, but what am I standing up here for? The bar is open!"

Molly was always a reluctant attendee at retirement parties, contending with some truth that they were all alike. As soon as the speeches were over, she was ready to leave. "Let's just stay a half hour," Leopold suggested. "There are a few people I didn't get to see."

He got her a drink at the bar and left her with Fletcher and his wife as he went off to greet Judge Ritter. He didn't notice Margaret Cross until she spoke to him in the midst of the crowd. "Good evening, Captain. It's quite a party, isn't it?"

"Margaret, I didn't see you! Are you a friend of Gus's?"

"Not really, but he was very good to Leonard, especially near the end. He came to see him every week. The least I could do was come to his retirement party."

Leopold felt as if he'd been hit by a truck. He stood staring at her, then finally excused himself and moved on.

"What's so important you had to see me right away?" Gus Mannerd asked, seating himself by the desk in the manager's office Leopold had asked to use. "I got two hundred people out there waiting to have a drink with me."

"You might not feel like celebrating any more after you hear what I have to say, Gus. You see, I know about Adam Sinclair and the bank accounts. I know about you and Judge Cross. I know you engineered the cemetery robbery on Wednesday, and I'm pretty sure you killed Delgado and Oclatt."

"What? Are you crazy?"

"Listen to me for a minute. I discovered quite quickly that the cemetery robbery was merely a cover for getting into Judge Cross's coffin and stealing a journal he'd asked Margaret to bury with him. But the whole thing still didn't make sense. Why use four people for a very risky robbery when one or two could have dug up the coffin next week and accomplished the same thing with very little risk?

"I learned at the cemetery that security guards keep an eye on

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graves that haven't been filled yet, so stealing the journal that night would have been difficult without calling attention to the crime. Once we knew the object was to steal something from the coffin, Margaret Cross would have come forward to tell about the journal. Perhaps she even knew what it contained. Still, admitting the desire to get it as quickly as possible, the risk of the robbery seemed awfully great.

"Then Fletcher found something at Delgado's apartment—the police files on both Delgado and Oclatt. Someone had removed the files from Headquarters and given them to him, which explained why Fletcher couldn't find them earlier. Only someone connected with the Department could have done that, and it helped explain the timing of the cemetery robbery. Someone persuaded Delgado and Oclatt to hire two others and pull off the robbery the day of the funeral. Payment was to be cash plus those files. And it had to be this week because by next week he would have retired from the Department. Sure, he could have removed the files in advance, but as an ex-cop he'd have lacked the clout to force them to do his bidding."

"That's guesswork! The D.A. will laugh you out of the office."

"How about this? I recognized Delgado during the robbery and picked him out of the mug book. I sent Fletcher out to his address on North Road and we later found him dead there. As Fletcher passed your office Wednesday evening, you asked him to help clear out a bookcase. He couldn't, because he was going out to North Road and he told you so. To you, North Road meant Ray Delgado. You got out there first, slipped in the back door, and killed him. You might have phoned Oclatt to do the job, but I think you handled it yourself. Fletcher said the bookcase still wasn't cleared out yesterday morning."

"Just what was my motive for these bizarre crimes?"

"A bank employee named Sinclair who was arrested seven years ago for rigging the bank's computer to pay money into his account. Delgado made a copy of Judge Cross's journal before you killed him and I read about it in there. The judge never mentioned you by name and at first I thought the man who tried to bribe him was Sinclair's defense attorney. But that attorney is dead. I had nothing to link you to Judge Cross until just now when I saw Margaret at your party. She told me how good you'd been to her husband, visiting him every week, and suddenly everything fell into place. You visited him to get a look at that journal, to try and keep him from making

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some rash confession. He must have told you it would be buried with him.

"You were getting the same payoff as the judge because Sinclair's crime was embezzlement. You made the arrest seven years ago, or your squad did. Sinclair got to you with his promises and maybe you even suppressed some of the evidence to help get him off. You approached Judge Cross, and though he never verbally agreed to it he went along with the bribe offer. Sinclair went to Texas and taught his brother how to rig the bank's computer down there. I imagine there's been money flowing regularly to both Sinclairs, plus you and the judge. Something else—you were 'so good' to Judge Cross, but you didn't attend his funeral on Wednesday. Why? Because you knew about the robbery and wanted to stay far away."

Mannerd tried to smile. "What have you got, Leopold? Some police files found in Delgado's apartment? The fact that Fletcher told me he was going to North Road and my bookcase wasn't cleaned out the next morning? The fact that my department would have handled the Sinclair arrest and that I didn't attend Cross's funeral? It's nothing!"

"I'll be at your bank first thing Monday morning, Gus. If the wire transfers to your account match those to the judge's account, we've got you. And you know it."

Mannerd sat for a long time in silence, the noise from the party muffled beyond the closed door. Finally he said, "I turned in my service revolver yesterday, Leopold. Let me borrow yours and save everyone the cost of a trial."

Leopold shook his head. "You turned in your service revolver, but not the one you used to kill Delgado and Oclatt."

"They were a couple of punks. I did the city a favor."

"You weren't thinking about cleaning up the city when you killed them, Gus. You were thinking about saving your own hide and keeping us from questioning them."

Mannerd sighed and shook his head. "What are you doing this for, Leopold? You're older than me. You should be out of it. Why do you hang on?"

At first Leopold was at a loss for an answer. Then he remembered what Molly had said on Wednesday evening. "Because it's my life," he said.

"Q"

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a *NEW* short story by

SHIZUKO NATSUKI

At three-thirty, the pallbearers provided by the funeral parlor carried out the coffin and placed it in the hearse. Otomo's widow rode in back with the coffin while relatives and friends climbed into limousines hired for the occasion and followed the hearse to the crematorium.

Another funny (?) thing happening on the way to an interment by another especially prolific writer of short detective fiction, this grave incident set in the author's native Japan . . .

THE TASTE OF COCOA

by SHIZUKO NATSUKI

Toshinige Otomo's funeral was just finishing at his house in Takamatsu, and despite the fact that it was still only February there was a feeling of spring in the air. As the mourners, in their dark clothes, stepped out of the large house they paused to look up at the clear blue sky and several consulted their watches impatiently.

It was three-fifteen and the coffin was due to be carried out to the hearse at three-thirty. Two or three of the guests left straightaway, but most waited to see the coffin on its way.

There were about fifty or sixty guests in small groups around the front gate. Mitsuo Hirohashi stood alone near the hedge and thought back over his relationship with the deceased.

Otomo had worked in a business that had been under attack from the press and the public recently, but he had nevertheless managed to make a success of it. The atmosphere at the funeral seemed less pained than one expects at most funerals, and although this may

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have been due in part to the weather, Hirohashi guessed it was largely due to Otomo's profession.

Otomo had been fifty-three, quite young to die from cancer of the liver. It had been a painful death, but when he considered the wicked things Otomo had done when he was alive, Hirohashi secretly felt it had been no more than he deserved.

At three-thirty, the pallbearers provided by the funeral parlor carried out the coffin and placed it in the hearse. Otomo's widow rode in back with the coffin while relatives and friends climbed into limousines hired for the occasion and followed the hearse to the crematorium.

No sooner had the last car pulled away from the gate than the others who had been waiting there began to split up, some moving toward the main road, where there would be plenty of taxis, and others heading toward cars they had left nearby. Although there was nothing to stop them from making their own way to the crematorium, very few seemed inclined to do so.

Hirohashi stood watching the thinning crowd trying to decide what he should do. He had been very close to Otomo, probably a good deal closer than most of the friends who had driven off in the limousines. But both of them had kept quiet about their relationship, and even Otomo's wife, who didn't seem to know very much about his work, had driven off without a word to him. As he stepped outside the gate, still uncertain of his course of action, a small red car pulled up beside him. It was driven by a good-looking, refined young woman wearing wire-rimmed glasses—he remembered having noticed her sitting not far from him during the funeral service.

"Can I give you a lift?"

"Yes, but—"

"You are going to the crematorium, aren't you? I'm on my way there myself."

"Really? In that case I will."

She reached over and unlocked the passenger door for him and he climbed in beside her.

As they turned into the outer loop road, he introduced himself. "My name is Hirohashi—I used to work with Mr. Otomo."

"My name is Yoko Kato. Someone very close to me knew Mr. Otomo when he was still alive."

"You didn't know Mr. Otomo personally, then?"

"No, I work in an entirely different field myself."

"What kind of work do you do?"

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"I'm an assistant in the fermentology lab in the agricultural department of a university," she answered simply.

"Really? I would never have guessed a beautiful woman like you would be doing such a serious job." He smiled.

"I understand Mr. Otomo dealt in stocks, or something financial. Are you in the same line?"

"I suppose you could say that." Actually Otomo was the president of a company that dealt in mortgage bonds. Hirohashi was his assistant.

The road along which they were driving was bordered with private houses and small condominiums, but there was still a fair amount of green left here and there. But as always, it was very crowded and the cars could only move at a crawl. The sun was hot.

"What exactly do you do?" Hirohashi felt that she was straining to keep up the conversation.

"Well, to put it simply, we lend money to businesses or to private individuals and they put up their real estate as collateral. Then we take the mortgage to the Legal Affairs Office, which issues us with mortgage bonds—then we sell the smaller bonds to investors."

When she frowned, he tried to make it easier for her to understand. "Let's say that I give A a mortgage for one hundred million yen. I will take the mortgage papers to the Legal Affairs Office and have them issue me with ten-million-yen bonds I will then sell to the investors. The investors will get paid annual interest, and when the bond expires, they'll be paid back its face value. The bonds last from one to five years and pay seven to eight percent per annum—which is something in these days of low interest."

If that was really all there was to it, he thought, there would have been no problems. The system of issuing mortgage bonds was introduced originally from the West during the first half of the century, but paperwork was so complicated that they didn't catch on until the recent introduction of low-cost, short-term bonds. This coincided with the drop in interest rates on other forms of savings and overnight they became one of the fastest-growing methods of saving.

In order to cope with the demand, countless real-estate agents and financial businesses restructured their companies to deal in these bonds and new businesses had sprung up all over. All it took to start a brokerage was to have it registered.

As the market expanded, so did the number of frauds. In some cases, unscrupulous brokers issued bonds without having received a mortgage bond from the Legal Affairs Office. Or they would sell

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two or three times more the amount in bonds than the land was worth. Either way, they were unable to make payment when the bonds were due.

Another common kind of fraud was to find a piece of land that looked valuable on paper but was in fact useless—for instance, a large tract of land in the city that could not be developed for some reason or another—and have a dummy company buy it very cheaply. The broker would then "lend" the dummy company several millions against the land and have the Legal Affairs Office issue bonds on the loan. Before the money on the bonds became due, they would find another piece of land and do the same thing in order to get the money to pay back the first creditors.

Otomo's company dealt mainly in the latter type of fraud and it was Hirohashi's job to find land that looked suitably expensive but could be bought for a reasonable price. He wasn't happy about doing this and many times he had tried to break off with Otomo, but they had been friends for a long time and, besides, he owed Otomo a considerable sum of money. Although they were supposed to be working together, the older man was much more adept at swindling people and all the real profits fell into his pocket. As the years passed, Hirohashi found himself falling deeper and deeper into debt.

"I heard that he dealt in real estate before he became involved in bonds," Yoko said.

"Yes, he only became a mortgage broker about a year ago. I helped him out now and again, but I still concentrated on real estate. I have my own agency." He didn't add that it was a very small office near the railway station at Ebisu.

"Did you know each other for long?"

"Yes, it must be eighteen years now."

"How did you first meet?"

"Well, I was stopped for speeding one day, and although I received several summonses to go to court I ignored them—after all, it was only a traffic violation. But one day the police came and arrested me."

"They like to make an example of people now and again."

"Yes, that's right. I was just unlucky. They kept me locked up for the night and next morning they took me to the traffic court in a police bus. I got off with just a fine, but it was an experience I wouldn't like to go through again."

"Yes, I can imagine."

"Anyway, I was in the same cell as Otomo. We got to talking and

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I found that we were in the same business. We hit it off well, and after we were released we went out for a drink together."

Yoko was silent and Hirohashi watched the road ahead and thought about Otomo. Although he regretted their relationship now, he and Otomo had managed to make a good deal of money during the period of rapid expansion in the Sixties. Even the oil crisis had not hurt them as much as it might have—although when he looked back over that period now, he realized that most of the money they made had gone to Otomo and he had merely been used. All he had got out of it were some expensive habits he could not afford to support, and Otomo had taken advantage of this to lend him the money that made it impossible for him to break off their relationship.

"This road is always so crowded," Yoko complained as the traffic slowed.

They finally left Nerima ward and were driving through Wako. It was still bright outside and Yoko squinted slightly as she looked around. Her eyes came to rest on something, and although he preferred to watch her face than the surrounding buildings Hirohashi looked to see what had caught her attention.

There was a four-story condominium standing tall among the houses. It was rather fashionable, with a green roof, a beige exterior, and a stained-glass window on every floor. He felt a shock of recognition and wished he had never noticed it. There could be no mistake. He recognized the stained-glass windows and realized that they must be in Wako.

"Is there something wrong?" Yoko asked, looking at him.

"No, nothing."

"Is it something about that building?"

"No, I just had the idea I've been here before."

"On business?"

She looked at him with frank curiosity, but this was something he could never tell anyone about.

Of all the dishonest things he and Otomo had done during their career together, it had been the worst. The whole affair had left a bad taste in his mouth and he didn't like to think about it.

It had happened at around the time Otomo was thinking of starting in the realty-bond business. Real estate didn't pay the big dividends it once had and he was trying to raise the capital to start the new business.

The year before last, he had met an old friend named Kitamura

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at a high-school reunion. Kitamura had been running a very popular restaurant in the exclusive Roppongi area called The Chimneyplace. He had taken it over from his wife's father and had had the interior refurbished six months earlier, but although it looked very prosperous he was in fact losing money.

It transpired that he had spent too much money on the redecoration and had already taken out three mortgages on the property to pay for it all. Not only that, but he tended to spend too much on the ingredients for the meals—and although it gave the establishment an excellent reputation, he was not making money. Even when he was at school, Kitamura had been very highly strung and if his wife's family hadn't happened to be restauranteurs, he would never have entered that line of business—he was just not cut out for it, he had come from a family of scientists. Eventually he knew he couldn't keep on as he was, so he had made up his mind to sell part of the land that was used as the car park in order to pay off his debts. He had approached Hirohashi to ask if he could introduce him to someone who could be trusted to handle the deal. And so Hirohashi introduced him to Otomo.

When he thought about it afterward, Hirohashi realized that Otomo must have decided to doublecross Kitamura from the start. First of all, he gave him a thirty-million-yen loan against the land, then he had him draw up a power-of-attorney to make sure he didn't have to employ another agent to sell the land. However, having done so, he made no effort to sell the land at all, and as time passed interest on the loans Kitamura had already received built up.

Otomo made him two more small loans, but the day came when Kitamura had to pay back the principle and he had no way of doing so. He went to Otomo and asked him for help, but Otomo said that if he couldn't raise the money any other way he would have to sell the rest of the land. Kitamura had no alternative but to agree and he drew up a document authorizing Otomo to sell the land on his behalf. In the meantime, Otomo agreed to pay his debts.

Otomo sold the land at a ridiculously low price to a dummy company he set up and then sold it again at a huge profit. Kitamura had thought that if he sold all the land he would be able to pay off all his debts and still be left with a large amount of capital, but as it was he received almost nothing. He had already sold his house in Ogikubo and so he rented a small condominium in Wako and sent his wife and children back to stay with her parents in Kanagawa

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Prefecture. The night he finished his negotiations with Otomo, he went back to the apartment and hanged himself in the bathroom.

After Kitamura's death, his family hired lawyers and tried to sue Otomo for forgery and disseizin. Otomo and Hirohashi were called to the police station several times to be interrogated, but with Kitamura dead the investigation did not proceed very smoothly. After three months, the case was closed and the police urged both parties to come to some kind of private agreement.

Finally, in July of last year, Otomo had agreed to pay Kitamura's dependents the sum of twenty million yen. One hot day at the end of the month, he asked Hirohashi to come with him to make the payment. For some reason, the rent on the apartment where Kitamura died had continued to be paid after his death and the relatives' lawyer set that as the site for the meeting. They were led into the living room, which contained the stained-glass window that could be seen from the street, and although it had been a very hot day the air-conditioning in the room made it cold inside.

"Although I say this case was brought by the relatives of the deceased," the elderly lawyer said, "Mr. Kitamura's father, who is a university professor, lives in Gunma Prefecture and his wife has gone back to live with her parents in Kanagawa Prefecture. As a result, it is his sister who lives in Tokyo who retained me to bring this case against you. She is here but she does not want to meet either of you. She was very close to her brother and does not think she would be able to control her emotions if she met you in person, so I have been authorized to act on her behalf in this matter."

He insisted on going over the whole complicated case again, step by step, and it seemed to take forever before he signed the agreement. By the time they had both put their seals on the document, three hours had passed—and with the air-conditioning going full blast, the room was not only very cold but also very dry. Hirohashi's throat was parched. In all that time, they had not been offered so much as a cup of tea.

However, once they signed the document, there was a knock on the door and, going to answer it, the lawyer returned with three cups on a tray. Hirohashi assumed Kitamura's sister had prepared it and gone away without showing herself. The cups contained cocoa—hot, sweet cocoa with plenty of milk. Cocoa had never tasted as good to him as it did that day. Even now he could recall the taste of it in his throat.

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He shook his head and stretched. Looking out of the window, he saw that they had left Wako and moved back into the city.

"May I ask if you are married?" he asked.

"Yes, I am."

"And you work in a fermentology laboratory?"

"Yes. I'm involved in the study of microorganisms. I specialize in mold, in particular."

"Oh." Hirohashi knew nothing about the subject and couldn't think of anything else to say. He studied this sophisticated young woman's profile.

"I understand Mr. Otomo died of cancer of the liver. It must have been very painful for him. He had a great deal to live for."

"Yes. He first learned that he had the disease last October. He lasted only four months."

"It's frightening, isn't it? Especially these days, when you can infect someone intentionally."

"What? Did you say intentionally?"

"Yes. Although I suppose 'infect' might be too strong a word. It may take a little time, but it is quite easy to cause a person to get, and die of, cancer. —I'm sorry, this is an insensitive topic for Mr. Otomo's funeral."

"No—go on, please."

"An example often brought up in this connection is that of the workers who used to paint the luminous figures on watch faces. Many died of cancer of the tongue, and later it was discovered that they had a habit of licking the paint brushes while they worked."

"You mean luminous paint is cancer-forming?"

"Yes. There are any number of radioactive substances that will cause cancer if they are ingested. Strontium seventy is especially deadly. A minute amount is sufficient to cause cancer—and chemically it resembles ordinary salt, so there is no way of discovering it in the body afterward."

"But you said you studied mold, didn't you?"

"Yes. And do you know there is a kind of mold, found on peanuts, called Aspergillius, which exercises a very poisonous toxin known as aflatoxin B? There was a famous case in Britain at a turkey farm. The turkeys were all raised on peanuts, and then suddenly several hundred thousand of them died. They performed autopsies on the birds and found that they had died of cancer of the liver. Aflatoxin B is a very powerful cancer-causing agent. It takes only 0.02 p.p.m. to cause cancer in a rat. If as little as one milligram is fed to a

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human he will get cancer after about sixty days—although the time factor depends on the dosage and the physical condition of the subject."

"It's a frightening thought, isn't it?"

"Yes. And the original mold dies when the toxin is extracted, so even if an autopsy is performed there will be nothing to show what caused it."

"It would be terrible if someone were to give it to you without your knowing it, wouldn't it?" He shuddered. "I don't suppose you could tell me where I could get some of this mold, do you?" he joked. "In case I come across someone I want to do away with."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but it's not for sale anywhere. If it were, the world would be full of perfect murders."

"So I suppose that only scientists who deal with that kind of thing are in a position to obtain it," he said lightly.

But as he spoke, the word "scientists" rang a bell. Kitamura's family had been scientists, hadn't they?

"It's quite easy to extract the aflatoxin B from the mold with the use of an organic solvent," Yoko murmured. "It's quite simple to administer it to the subject, too."

Hirohashi looked over at her profile again and she gave him a bright smile.

"You need only a small amount and to hide the taste in a sweet drink. The toxin doesn't dissolve very easily in water, so it is preferable to use oil. Milk would do very well. A cup of white coffee or cocoa would be ideal."

They turned off the loop road and headed toward the crematorium next to the river there. The smoke coming out of the chimney looked rather beautiful in the bright sun.

"Well, here we are at last," Yoko said, sounding relieved. "I'm sorry, because of the delays on the road, I won't be able to wait for the cremation after all. I'll have to leave you here."

Hirohashi had no choice but to get out of the car. As he reached for the door handle, she turned toward him. "Please look after yourself," she said.

He realized that until then he had been speaking to her profile and had had only a fleeting glimpse of her face when he entered the car. She was a very intelligent-looking woman with narrow features. Her wire-rimmed glasses suited her very well, but if she were to take them off she would look very much like someone else he knew. But who was it . . . ?

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He stood on the pavement and tried to remember what Kitamura's sister's name had been. It had been on the document he had signed, but what was it? The surname was something common, like Suzuki or Sato, but he hadn't been able to read the character she used for her first name. Then all of a sudden it came to him. It had probably read Yoko.

As he watched Yoko Kato's red car disappear back onto the loop road, her words came back to him.

"He will get cancer after about sixty days—although the time factor depends on the dosage and the physical condition of the subject."

At the same time, the taste of that hot sweet cocoa came to his throat again.

"Q"

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THE JURY BOX
by ALLEN J. HUBIN

Michael Innes, in real life novelist, scholar, and Oxford don J. I. M. Stewart (1906–), has produced a critically acclaimed body of detective fiction over half a century. Of forty-eight volumes, thirty-five, including the first (Seven Suspects, 1937), feature John Appleby, who rose to the top of London's Metropolitan Police and continued his criminous engagements into retirement.

A report out of England some months ago indicated that Innes intends *Appleby and the Ospreys* (Dodd Mead, $15.95) to be his last in our field, surely an occasion for mourning. The book itself is Innes in good form: erudite and wittily observant. Appleby, living eventfully in the English countryside, would hardly call the Ospreys friends. But when Lord Osprey is murdered, the dithery Lady Osprey asks his help. So Sir John, with reluctance, goes to Scamnum Court, a huge old accumulation of rooms. Here the corpse and the local Inspector Ringwood are in attendance, but the probably valuable Osprey coin collection is not. The self-appointed chief suspect announces himself early on, and we're off.

Rex Burns departs from his series about Denver cop Gabe Wager to offer Devlin Kirk, Denver private eye, in *Suicide Season* (Viking, $16.95). This is a particular joy, not only because of the tidy plot and prose, but also because Devlin is a much more appealing character than the morose Wager. Kirk, with partner Homer Bunchcraft, is trying to establish his new investigation agency and to recover from the recent suicide of his father, who never told Devlin what was wrong nor asked for help. The widow of another dead man, another suicide, hires Kirk & Associates to show whether her husband had sold his employer's real-estate-development plan to a competitor. Before long, murder, along with a couple of homicidal lowlifes, further complicates the picture. What else is under nearby rocks? Excellent!

The fourth of California private-eye Kinsey Millhone's cases is *"D" Is for Deadbeat* by Sue Grafton (Holt, $15.95). A shabby fellow turns up in Kinsey's office and hires her to deliver the unlikely: a check for $25,000. But the check to pay her for the job bounces, and the fellow shortly turns up deceased. Accident while drunk, say the police. But Kinsey has questions and so does the new client she has acquired. How did a person who just got out of jail amass $25,000? Where does his legal wife fit into this? His bigamous second wife? The families of the people killed in the traffic accident that sent him to jail for vehicular homicide? This tale goes down very smoothly. Millhone is growing on me.

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Rick Boyer's first novel about Boston oral surgeon Charlie Adams was *Billingsgate Shoal,* Edgar winner for best mystery novel in 1982. Noting that he had a good thing going, Boyer continued with Adams, and the series has now reached four with *Moscow Metal* (Houghton Mifflin, $15.95). Adams' beloved cat, Claude, dies before his eyes in hideous convulsions. His wife is grievously imperiled by the same agent that killed the cat. This propels Doc Adams into the affairs of his neighbor, Emil Haszmanay, who seems to have disappeared leaving a corpse nearby. Those affairs also greatly interest the FBI and the KGB, a conjunction well designed to produce fatalities. Like Doc's. Good puzzle, high suspense.

A Civil Death (Viking, $15.95) is the third in the New Orleans series featuring Police Captain "Rat" Trapp by John William Corrington and Joyce H. Corrington. In each of the three, the story has been seen through different eyes among the several recurring characters. This is a very effective device, giving each work a distinctive flavor. Here the narrative voice is that of Denise Lemoyne. She's an assistant D.A., fiancee to reporter Wes Colvin, friend to Captain Trapp. She's old New Orleans blood, and bloody death intrudes into her extended family with the shooting of her godmother. The prime suspect is evident, and Trapp fastens onto him. Denise is less sure. Family skeletons, secret relationships, and hidden passions come to light as she probes, risking much herself to find the truth. Very flavorful storytelling and much to be enjoyed—only the unwise decision not to use quotation marks around dialogue in the text provides a distraction.

The latest by Peter Lovesey, *Rough Cider* (Mysterious Press, $15.95), goes back in time, as is his wont—on this occasion to 1964, with a flashback to 1943. Nine-year-old Theo Sinclair was evacuated from London to a Somerset farm, where intrigues with some American soldiers billeted nearby led to murder. Theo was star witness at the trial, which resulted in an execution. Two decades later, Sinclair is a history professor, his past long behind him and forgotten—until an American girl exhumes it, and the dying starts again. A nicely atmospheric tale, holding interest tightly from the outset.

It's more than a tad surprising to find a lecturer in old and medieval English at a university in Ireland setting his first mystery novel in a small city in Montana, but such is the case with Christian D. Stevens' *Printer's Devil* (St. Martin's, $15.95). Stevens is also a newspaperman, and ink flows through this tale as well as through the veins of Steve Hadleyman, its hero. Hadleyman's venture as publisher and editor in Great Falls having fallen through, he accepts a temporary editing assignment in Marksburg on invitation of Birdie Johnson, a former colleague. Marksburg is a strange place, brooding and suspicious and hostile. Certainly its police are. Ste-

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vens' occasion for meeting the local cops arises out of his first experience in Marksburg: he discovers Johnson's liberally punctured corpse. But despite this disconcerting start, and the minimal competence of most of the *Dispatch* staff, Hadleyman is determined to keep the paper publishing. If he can stay out of jail. And alive. This is a fresh and absorbing tale, well to be recommended.

Faye Kellerman brings back L.A. cop Peter Decker and orthodox Jewish widow Rina Lazarus in *Sacred and Profane* (Arbor, $16.95). This is high suspense, with the continued adroit mingling of romantic and religious interplay between the characters. But the case that occupies Decker is graphic and hideous, no pleasure whatever to read about, no matter how truly realistic the monstrous event or how capable the telling. Decker is giving Lazarus's two boys an outing in the L.A. hills when they stumble across two rotting corpses. Good police work identifies them, and Decker follows the trail into the sewers of pornography.

Sometimes actor and private investigator Elton Dancey debuts in *Gun Play*, by the pseudonymous R. B. Phillips (Foul Play). Dancey is of the familiar mold: single and sexually available, not very successful at either of his sometime roles, perpetually on the edge of financial insolvency, battered and beaten through his cases (at least this one), and with a repertoire of smart and amusing quips. And his quest here, the finding of someone's missing daughter, also hardly breaks new ground. But despite all this conformance to pattern, Phillips' sleuth and grimy L.A. are very well caught, and the story has a strong ambience of its own.

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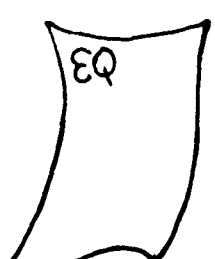

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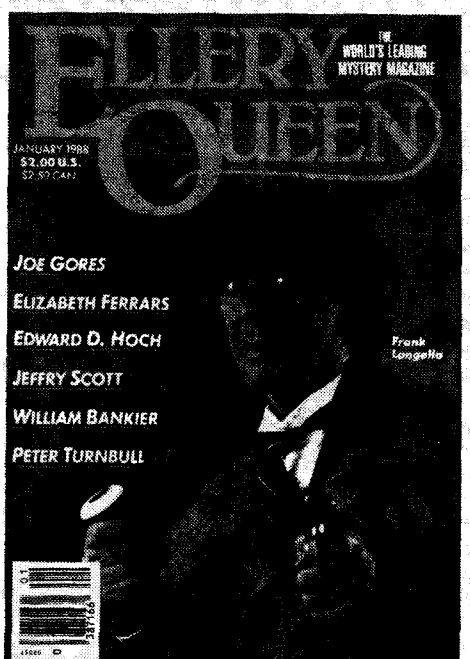

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a distinguished reprint by

ROBERT HENSON

Dillinger was on the magazine cover with his crooked smile. So was Lindbergh without his boyish one. It was doubtful that the editor intended any meaningful juxtaposition. Reflecting on this memory from his Oklahoma childhood years later while serving eleven months and twenty days, a minimum-security prisoner remembers his father tapping the cover with a square forefinger. "There you have it: Lindbergh—or Dillinger," he'd said. "You have a choice. It's up to you . . . "

LINDBERGH—OR DILLINGER

by ROBERT HENSON

Home one month today. The caseworker told me to expect a period of disorientation, lassitude—"You'll probably watch a lot of TV." True.

I was eligible for parole in August. Then got suckered into the "strike" (they don't have riots in minimum security). At my hearing I admitted I'd let one of the ringleaders use the mimeograph I was in charge of. They asked if I knew the contents of the handbill he'd run off.

I said, "Only in a general way."

"You mean you didn't read it?"

"No."

"But you knew it called for a confrontation with the administration."

"No."

They didn't buy it (it was only technically the truth). Extended my sentence to "date of completion." So instead of eight months, the full twelve—or rather, eleven and twenty days. They did me a favor

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and released me in time for Christmas. Worst thing they could have done.

Barbara and the kids picked me up at the same gate where they'd left me. (I was allowed to turn myself in.) Pam said cheerfully, "If you'd gotten out in August, it would have been off-season. So you see?" She meant Barbados. The Merritts had written to say that their invitation was still open.

Roger was cheerful for a different reason. The fact that I was willing to serve another four months, he said, shows that I'm ready to make a decision for Christ. "You acted as your brother's keeper." Presumably for the first time.

He wants to drop out of college at the end of this semester to work full time at something called Total Crusade. "Talk to him!" Barbara says. How can I? He talks to *me*. "You can't put off the decision much longer, Dad."

Now they're back in school. Barbara's in her part of the house, I'm in mine—looking through some notes I jotted down in prison. She refuses to go to Barbados—"Everyone pretending nothing has happened."

But what *has* happened?

Once, during those nerve-frazzled months between the indictment and the sentencing, I told her she lacked objectivity because no one in her family had ever gone to prison, whereas I had a cousin who'd done a stretch back in the Thirties.

"I wish you wouldn't joke."

I wasn't entirely. That cousin gave me quite a bit of perspective. His case even resembled mine—conspiracy to commit fraud—something like that. I was a kid at the time. He was cashier of a bank in another town. The president of the bank—evidently trying to forestall a closing—made a deal with the city commissioners by which they declared that the city was temporarily without funds and issued new notes which were deposited in the bank. But besides the fact that the city had funds on deposit and wasn't even temporarily broke, the "conspirators" badly overestimated revenues that were supposed to pay off the notes. So the bank failed anyway, and the scandal broke.

The president shot himself, leaving a note which emphasized that no one had been trying to get rich—this fraud was in the line of civic duty. The court seems to have agreed, at least partly, because none of the commissioners served time. My cousin took the rap. The family

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maintained not only that he was a scapegoat ("low man on the totem pole") but that he hadn't even been aware of the true nature of the scheme the others were concocting—something I strongly doubt. He himself never claimed that much; he admitted to the part he played and was loyally silent about the rest. In those days it was regarded as being in his favor that "he could tell plenty if he wanted to."

He came out with his head up. Went to work developing a formula for frozen custard, based on a recipe of his wife's, and was soon franchising frozen-custard stands all over the state. He was in better shape after prison than before.

"But I suppose *you'd* rather he'd done what the president did," I said gratuitously.

She was in a mood to strike back. "Not at all. I can see why you admire him. He was well ahead of his time."

I always told her I was willing to pay, if and when I was found guilty. But I never expected to "benefit" from the experience. I toyed with the idea of faking it—pretending I felt something beyond legal guilt. Never could.

"I won't grovel!"

"Grovel—to me?"

"That's what it boils down to. I know how you feel."

"But I'm still your *wife,* isn't that what you really mean?"

"It isn't for better or worse, that's what *you* really mean!"

"This isn't some goddamn soap opera!"

Our friends predicted that this experience would strengthen our marriage. They kept citing tests of their own: the death of a child, discovery of unfaithfulness, etc. No. It searched out the weaknesses.

Most of the time we didn't yell. "Married twenty-two years," I'd say. "You can't be seeing something you've never seen before."

"Well, neither can you," she'd say with all the sad sweetness in the world.

Other times, though, she'd say that until "this" happened she never realized how cynical I'd become, and I'd say I never realized how naive she'd remained. Once she put her finger right on the heart of the matter: "We're talking about *character.*"

Every time she visited at Acorn Hill, I felt like sitting down and writing the same letter: "We're disappointed in each other, isn't that what it really comes down to? But please—don't drift away—we can work it out."

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The drifting went on. Goes on.

I was twelve years old when my cousin fell. That same year (1933) over in Oklahoma City, just ninety miles away, Machine Gun Kelly kidnaped Charles Urschel. Crashed a bridge party on the sun porch of his mansion. Didn't know a Wealthy Oil Man when he saw one—had to ask.

The guests, menaced by the famous machine gun, didn't dare lie. (In the kind of eyewitness account that made my mother sniff, one of them wrote: "Berenice Urschel, who had just made an original demand of two hearts, felt her spirits fall from the exhilaration of a possible grand-slam to the horrible possibility of her husband's being kidnaped.") The ransom demand arrived two days later—for the unheard-of sum of $200,000.

Only the year before, the Lindbergh kidnaping had given me nightmares. The whole town seemed to take it personally. Friends and relatives talked of nothing else. My father had to keep explaining to me that kidnapers didn't pick on small-town grocers' kids, only rich people's.

"But Lindy isn't rich." That's what I'd always heard. One of his chief virtues was that the "money boys back East" hadn't been able to corrupt him with any of their deals.

"No," my father said, "but they think he is."

"Couldn't they make the same mistake about—about—"

"No," he'd say patiently. "Lindy's famous. They think he's rich because he's *done* something. Now stop worrying."

He may have regretted those reassuring words a year later. I'd not only stopped worrying, I showed signs of going over to the other side. I haunted the radio for news flashes about Kelly and pestered my father for the front page of the *Daily Oklahoman*. (I'd never pestered him before for anything except the funnies.)

"Do you know why they call him Machine Gun, Dad?"

It was a habit of his to show that a question was foolish by not acknowledging that it had been asked, but his principles no longer deterred me: "Because he can write his name on a wall with bullets!"

"The only wall he'll write his name on," came the crushing reply, "is the wall of a Federal pen. Especially now that Hoover's boys are after him."

I knew he was right but somehow wasn't crushed. Somehow I already knew that there are crimes and crimes. Kelly didn't nap kids, and he picked on adults who were merely rich. He had to be

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caught and punished, of course, but my impression, however inadvertent (maybe from a sniff), was that the Urschels would never miss the money. And in fact, once the ransom was paid and Urschel released unharmed, moral indignation seeped out of my parents' attitude. The contest between Kelly and Hoover's boys was purely in the realm of action.

For fifty-six riveting days, he led them on a chase through seventeen states. Taunting notes eddied in his wake: "I am drinking good beer and will see you like I should have left you at first—stone dead." When he was finally cornered in a motel near Memphis, he came out with his hands up and a phrase on his lips: "Don't shoot, G-Men!" He gave them their name.

The trial was ahead of its time—as bizarre as some of the political trials of the Sixties. (Seven years later Kelly took it in his head to write Urschel again, this time from Alcatraz: "Need I remind you of the enthusiasm of the days of my trial? You and your friends shared in it; seemed to revel in it. What produced it? The Department of Justice's love of the dramatic? The public's desire for a free show?") One afternoon as he was being led from the courthouse to the police van, a newsboy pushed through the crowd, crying, "Latest on the trial—read all about it—Popgun Kelly!" Kelly lunged for him in a scarlet rage—had to be pistol-whipped into submission.

My father made sure I read all about it, and when Kelly got life he handed me the front page without being asked. "Well, what do you think of Popgun now?"

He didn't know that I was already transferring my corrupt attention to someone who wore a jaunty straw hat, vaulted over tellers' cages, and robbed ten banks in three weeks. He happened to be in temporary eclipse during Kelly's brief moment of glory, but precisely on October twelfth, the very last day of that glory, he made the first of his dazzling jail breaks.

What did I think of Popgun now? I hardly noticed, with John Dillinger in my eyes.

One evening, Gene Enright stopped by my bunk and scuffed through a couple of the books Barbara had been digging up for me. "How come you're reading up on Dillinger? You gonna rob banks when you get out?"

I was surprised he knew anything about Dillinger except just the name—he's not much older than Roger. He assured me he knew

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about Dillinger, Bonnie and Clyde, Pretty Boy Floyd, "all them dudes."

My father was too shrewd to make a Federal case out of my half surreptitious collection of begged, borrowed, swapped for, even swiped (a couple of times) crime and detective pulps. It was my mother who finally ordered them out of the house. She was not moved by my tirade (already the lawyer) about the privacy of the floor space under my bed—she saw them every time she swept and her antipathy took precedence over my rights. She didn't object to the printed matter (which she hadn't read a line of) but to the photographs, and what offended her wasn't that the victims strewn through the pages had been shot, stabbed, poisoned, and garroted (and looked it), but that the *female* victims—so often discovered in "trysts" and "love nests"—were so often in nothing but their slips or bra and panties. Even a faithful gun moll shot down while scrambling out of a getaway car usually managed to fall so that several inches of thigh showed between stocking top and hiked-up skirt.

My father spotted a chance to treat me man-to-man, and took it. "Better keep them things down at the store." His chummy manner didn't fool me. I knew his real motive: to keep the enemy in view. (Dillinger, Sr. had the same problem when John developed an obsessive interest in Jesse James and read everything Street and Smith put out.) I didn't care. I stacked my banished collection in the rear of the store and read between deliveries on my bike. He bided his time.

One day he came back with a phone order for me to box and deliver. I had my head buried in something with a title like "John Dillinger—Robin Hood or Cold-Blooded Killer?" (A few months before, he had shot his first man and set off a reassessment of his nice-guy image.) I put the magazine down. Dillinger was on the cover with his crooked smile. So was Lindbergh without his boyish one. ("New Leads in the Lindbergh Kidnaping" alternated regularly that year with "Fresh Heartbreak in the Lindbergh Case.") Doubtful that the editor intended any meaningful juxtaposition—the photographs were too ill-matched—the men seemed to be staring past each other's heads. But my father was fighting back. He tapped the cover with a square forefinger: "There you have it: Lindbergh—or Dillinger."

I was studying Mrs. Carmichael's grocery list: "Do we have any birthday candles?"

"You have a choice. It's up to you . . ."

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A few weeks after I got to Acorn Hill I came across a copy of *The Spirit of St. Louis* in the library, or what passed for a library. As miscellaneous and disorganized as a second-hand bookstore, except for the collection of law books. (These belonged to various inmates who were required, in the prison's niggling way, to put them "on hold" and use them only *in* the library.) I asked the librarian—formerly a major-league umpire—if there were any other books by or about Charles Lindbergh? Not that he knew of. How about John Dillinger? Him, neither.

I felt superstitious. That remark of my father's had come back to me several times in recent months. Finding Lindbergh's autobiography *here,* of all places, struck me as the kind of coincidence I shouldn't ignore.

I enlisted Barbara. I didn't even know titles. "Anything you can find on either man," I said.

She was surprised we could have books about crime—"real crime," not murder mysteries.

"Anything except pornography."

Something was bothering her. Twenty-two years, you don't miss the signs—even in a prison dayroom. It turned out that she was thinking of the same remark. Once during those months, when our moods never seemed to coincide, I'd jokingly repeated it to her, and succeeded in making her very tense. She asked if that had anything to do with this.

"Yes. I have an urge to go back. I feel as if I should—now that I have the time."

Silence.

"I mean go back in the sense of evaluating things. Not nostalgia."

Silence. Inner resistance.

"Anything wrong?"

"No."

I wanted to yell, "Isn't this what you've been wanting? Isn't it what you say I've been avoiding?" Things were shaky enough. I said, "If it sounds like too much trouble, or if it would embarrass you for some reason, forget it. But so far as the front office is concerned, no problem. I'll put in a regular cop-out."

"Cop-out?"

"Request."

"If you mean request, why don't you *say* request?"

Lindbergh took my father's generation by storm, but I was only

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six at the time of his flight so had to accept him pretty much on faith. Not that I ever doubted that he was the real thing. One of my clearest memories from grade school is his picture on the wall, right up there with Washington and Lincoln. Probably my teachers—all female, all "Miss" in those days—were in love with him. "Blue eyes, fair hair, so much slimmer, so much taller, so much more poised *than I expected*," *Anne Morrow wrote after first meeting him.* "Shy, of course, but with a smile that completely changes his face." The quintessential boy next door.

At my uncle's garage he was partly that, too. The garage, catty-corner across from the grocery store, was one of my favorite hangouts, partly because it was also a favorite hangout for my uncle's cronies—pitching washers in the summer, warming their hands around an oil drum in the winter, talking endlessly about politics and sports. To them Lindbergh was always "Lindy." In their mind's eye, he always wore a leather helmet and looked up with narrowed eyes, as in the calendar picture taped to my uncle's wall. He combined, like the town's perennial high-school football heroes, youth and accomplishment.

Popularity as phenomenal as his, though, can't really be accounted for as if he's been an athlete or movie star. His appeal—"unconscious, untried for"—was clearly something special. Anne Morrow kept puzzling over the effect he had on both large crowds and select gatherings of "cynical, practical, worldly men." Why did he move them so?

One day when he took her flying, she stumbled on the explanation: "Impersonality!" Obviously she didn't mean that he was cold or mechanical but that there was some extraordinary harmony between ends and means in his life. The Atlantic flight was a sign of it that the whole world somehow understood. Vision proceeding directly to accomplishment—no personal hangups, no wrong moves. Character, talent, effort—all focused. Even his celebrated cleancut looks affirmed it: "Nothing smeared."

That's what moved my father and uncle so, with their perpetually blurred ends and means. "The last of the gods," Anne wrote, trying not to get carried away (she thought he was coming around to see her sister). But she was right. Lindbergh didn't really belong with folk heroes—they have a harder time. He had wings on his heels, like the old radiator caps of Mercury. "See how easy?" said the smile—transformingly communicative, even in photographs.

No wonder people followed after. My inspired uncle began to take

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flying lessons. Like thousands of others, he'd caught a vision of a time when planes would be as common as automobiles, and every man free!

One of the big studios made a movie about Lindbergh in the 1950s. Cost millions, lost millions. The producers discovered too late that audiences had changed since World War II. They'd gotten younger, and the young didn't know or care about Lindbergh.

I tried the name out on Gene to see if things had changed in the Seventies. He put on a show of indifference. "Lindbergh? I've heard of him. He was an explorer or something, right?"

"Close."

"He discovered the North Pole—right?"

"First man to fly the Atlantic alone."

"Yeah?"

He waited to see if I had a point to make, then told me he was selling steak from the kitchen. "For sandwiches, man! Wrap a piece in aluminum foil, fasten it to a lightbulb for a few minutes—delicious!" He offered to throw in the bread for nothing.

Indiana State Penitentiary (max), 1929. John Dillinger written up by a guard for "toasting bread and sausage in his cell."

Barbara came through. Pretty soon I had half a dozen books in my locker. I got an urge to take notes, and began to go to the Education Building every evening between supper and nine o'clock count. Nothing surreptitious, but it brought on a chat with the Superintendent.

"All our people seem to be writing books these days." Obviously a grievance.

I said I wasn't writing a book or even keeping a diary—just jotting down random notes on my reading. I said I understood the regulations on sending things out (we got all this at orientation).

"A lot of men understand regulations," he said, "but they can't handle freedom. Minimum security gets to be a temptation. Believe me, we know all the tricks. Keep your nose clean and you can do easy time. Try to take advantage and I'll bust your ass right back to max."

Gene: "I been in medium, maximum, and minimum. In some ways, I like max the best. You don't get as bored. Well, you get bored, but not as easy. Take Lewisburg. There's more to do there. They got

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more than one movie. They got an indoor gym with volleyball, basketball, not like this —— place where you can't do nothing but walk. There's more different guys to meet and talk to. There's also the hacks—the attitude of the hacks. That's what makes you feel like you can do your time or not. Here they got no strip cells or beatings, so they go in for chicken-shit harassment. They gotta find *some* way to institutionalize you."

Once a month my uncle drove to an airfield near Tulsa to log hours, learn maintenance, swap aviation talk. He gave me my first ride—breaking a promise to my mother. "What did you see?" my father asked anxiously (his collusion had somehow to be justified). "Noise," I answered honestly—that's what impressed me most. He looked disappointed but my uncle nodded as if I'd said exactly the right thing. "Goes right through you, don't it? Like lifting your own self off the ground."

His ambition was to own and operate an airfield on the outskirts of town. "All I need is a pasture, a couple of landing lights, a two-way radio." Once the Lindberghs cut across a corner of Oklahoma on their way to California and engine trouble forced them down onto a plowed field. Lindy, of course, didn't so much as blow a tire, but he had to wait three days for another monocoupe to arrive from St. Louis. My uncle agonized over it. If only he'd had his landing strip, his radio, a small hangar for overnight repairs.

My father tried to cheer him up. "You couldn't have done him no good—he was up near the state line, up near Waynoka," he kept saying, though he knew that wasn't the real point. The real point was the Depression. It would have been a stumbling block even if airfield requirements had stayed the same, but every time my uncle said, "All I need is—" the requirements seemed to multiply: a hangar, beacon lights, emergency landing space, auxiliary transportation, demands originating with a handful of companies who had airmail contracts and were using government subsidies to spin a web of freight and passenger lines from coast to coast.

And when the government showed a willingness to subsidize facilities as well as service, local politicians saw the light. Every little burg that ever had a railroad station (including ours) got busy with plans for a municipal airport. But cities soon showed who had the clout. Towns were relegated to serving feeder lines—then even those were gobbled up. Private airfields became the last refuge of barnstormers and gypsy flyers, then a convenience for the rich. Even if

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it had opened, my uncle's airfield would never have served his vision of the future.

He was the younger brother, but my father always deferred to him because of his mechanical aptitude. He saw in my uncle's thwarted ambition the usual fate of the little guy, and shook his head over how quickly it'd all happened. Barely five years after Lindbergh made the country air-conscious, aviation belonged to the money boys back East—the same ones who were responsible for the failure of local banks, the foreclosing of mortgages on farms, and the arrival, sinister as the boll weevil, of chain stores. Lindbergh married one of their daughters (he hadn't been coming to see the older sister, after all) and went to work on their behalf. His flight across Oklahoma was part of a survey of air routes for TWA. For Pan Am, he girdled the globe. And when the big carriers were accused of obtaining airmail contracts by fraud, he took their side against the President himself.

My father and uncle knew all this, but their good opinion of him was no more affected than their good opinion of private enterprise and individual initiative. "I don't say he's not well off," my father would argue with an occasional skeptic, "but he's earned what he's got. Nobody give it to him, and he didn't take it away from nobody." One of his favorite stories (from Will Rogers' newspaper column) was about how a bunch of rich fellers tried to settle a million dollars on Lindy after his flight "to save him from exploitation." Lindy blew up: "What do they think I am, some kind of charity!"

My uncle read in the *National Geographic* about how he took the first aerial photographs ever of an archeological site. He was on one of his Pan Am surveys, and when he got back he talked some of those rich friends into financing an expedition to explore the site—an ancient Mayan city, as it turned out, long invisible from the ground, now clear to be seen in glossy *Geographic* colors. "Archeology and Airplanes." My uncle would've left the next day to become one of the new breed of aerial prospectors—except for his family—except for hard times—except for except.

Lindbergh: "I prefer adventure to security, freedom to popularity, and conviction to influence." That's what my father and uncle sensed in him, and they weren't put off by the way the rich and powerful strove to associate themselves with him.

From money and power he was safe. From crime he was not. It was Bruno Hauptmann who canceled everything he stood for. "Have

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5000$ ready 2500$ in 20$ bills 1500$ in 10$ and 1000$ in 5$ bills The child is in gut care."

How assert your freedom against that? How make use of individualism and initiative?

Every Sunday for two months in every church in town, prayers went up for the baby's safe return. No use. Ends and means split apart all the way to the top. Lindy was no longer a god, he was a victim. One of us.

One weekend Barbara announced that she'd found everything she could on Lindbergh.

"Fine," I said.

"Dillinger, too."

"Okay."

"The subject isn't inexhaustible!"

"Why are you trying to pick a fight? It's okay. Thanks for all you've done."

For the first time she mentioned Betty Hart, a college friend, now a librarian. "She's the one you should thank. She made up a list, told me where to go—"

"I'd be happy to thank her."

"—and never once asked why."

"Well, then, I suppose I *can't* thank her."

It was during the week following this that my locker was tossed for the first time. I think I had about a dozen books. One of the hacks said that the "crime books" belonged on hold, and didn't I know that? I said I thought the rule applied only to law books. "Law and crime," he said, making up his own rule.

His partner tried to cover for him: "You're over the limit. Turn these five in." The Dillinger ones. I said it was the first time I'd ever heard of a limit, so I'd learned *two* new rules. "Keeping books in your locker is a privilege, not a right," he said, and wrote me up for insolence.

I told Gene once that prison in my opinion can't be treated as if it were an extension of straight society. It's actually a negative version of society. It's governed entirely by rules, and rules aren't rights or laws—they're inherently one-sided. That, I said, is what prison is all about, and no matter what reforms are made it will stay just what it is—a place where you're at someone else's disposal until "time" sets you free.

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"Man," he said, "you talk like one of them old old-timers at Lewisburg, the ones with the buckets and mops. Their whole life ain't nothing but doing time."

Later he said: "When you was on the outside you never thought, This here's a law, that's a rule, that's a right. You just thought, I believe I can screw 'em, and I'm gonna try. Right?"

The administration would deny it, but after Reception a kind of *de facto* segregation is encouraged at Acorn Hill: white collar/blue collar—in dorms, jobs, the dining hall, recreation. I don't know why it never occurred to me that Gene and I were becoming the odd couple.

Lindbergh *and* Dillinger:

1. Born, 1902, 1903.
2. Midwesterners: Minnesota, Indiana.
3. Bored by formal education. Lindbergh dropped out of college to enroll in flying school, Dillinger quit high school to become an apprentice machinist.
4. Early affinity for anything mechanical: cars, motorcycles, power tools, guns. They liked speed, noise, danger.
5. Early vocation. "When I was a child I used to imagine myself with wings on which I could swoop down off our roof into the valley, soaring through air from one bank to the other." Dillinger was just old enough to wait on customers in his father's store when he began to steal candy and gum for his favorite playmates. At thirteen, he organized a gang bang; at fourteen, coal-stealing raids; at sixteen, he became a VD statistic. His father thought the problem was the city—Indianapolis. He sold the grocery store and bought a farm eighteen miles from the county seat. John was soon annihilating the distance with his first motorcycle.

To pay expenses at flying school, Lindbergh became half of a stunt-flying team. He bought his first Jenny to solo in, then barnstormed through the South and Midwest. He had just passed his twenty-first birthday. Dillinger joined the Navy, went AWOL, came home to commit his first armed robbery—a grocer. He was caught. Dillinger, Sr. not only refused to pay for a lawyer, he wouldn't even go to the trial. John got the maximum: ten years. He had just turned twenty-one.

6. Fathers. When Lindbergh asked for permission to quit school and become a flyer, the answer was a flat no. "It's too dangerous—you're my only son." And was flying really a serious

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occupation? Why not law, or politics, or business? "He outlined several we might start." The last mention of Lindbergh, Sr. in *The Spirit of St. Louis* isn't his death in 1924 but his capitulation to his son's choice of a career. This happened after Charles took him up to scatter handbills during his campaign for the Senate. He found himself enjoying the ride, and began making plans to go up again. As for flying as a profession, " 'You're your own boss,' he said finally. And this time he really meant it."

Dillinger had to wait a little longer. In fact, he was almost thirty and had served nine years in two prisons. But those nine years (1924–1933) were secretly changing the old man's outlook. The airplane was here to stay, and so was crime—aided not only by the automobile and the submachine gun but by public rationalization of crime as old-fashioned rugged individualism. When Al Capone went to the race track, the crowd stood up and cheered. The bank robbers of the Thirties were avengers of bread lines and bank failures. The year of Dillinger's release was the first banner year for 1930s barnstormers. Bonnie and Clyde, Al Karpis, Ma Barker, Pretty Boy Floyd—all were in the headlines in 1933. Then the star made his entrance.

The police came looking for him at his father's farm after his first bank job. He hid in the orchard behind the house while Mr. Dillinger stalled and got rid of them. After his second job, he headed for Chicago, but not without stopping off to say goodbye and leave some money. From then on, no questions about his choice of a career. His exploits brought tears of pride to Mr. Dillinger's eyes, and when, finally, he had to go to Chicago to claim the body his only comment—dry-eyed—was: "He got a raw deal." A week later, he was on the vaudeville circuit, displaying mementos and moving audiences to tears with recollections of the "real" Johnny Dillinger.

I sent for the kids as soon as I knew I was in serious trouble and laid it on the line: I'd be indicted for sure, probably convicted. Probably I'd get a short sentence in a minimum-security prison—still, it would be a sentence and it would be prison.

I told them that what I'd done as a lawyer wasn't unusual on the level where corporate and political interests mingle. Furthermore, no one forced me. I personally didn't regard either what I'd done or my motivation for doing it as wrong. "Perjury" and "obstruction of justice" were my response to what I considered to be selective justice.

However, I said, there was no doubt that I did what I was accused

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of and that I'd tried to hide it (for Lavin-Stritchman, not for myself), and that a "moral" point of view could and would be taken by many people. I said it was up to them to decide what their own response would be, internally and externally. "Your mother and I have agreed that we ought not to try to influence you, and in fact we're asking you not to *let* us, in case we're tempted."

One of the few things we did work out.

Pam's attitude was another raw nerve in those months of waiting. Barbara kept her word about not interfering, but I never saw her angrier than she was the weekend Pam came home and announced breezily that she'd become "everyone's favorite daughter."

Sparks flew when she left.

"*You're* the only one who thinks loyalty's a crime!" I shouted.

"It's not the loyalty I mind, it's the flippancy."

She had the idea that Pam was putting on an act to hide something.

"Like what?"

"Disappointment."

"Has she said anything like that to you?"

"Obviously not."

"And you, obviously, don't listen to what she *does* say."

Because Pam had decided, at the beginning and on her own, that she would face the problem squarely. No one, especially at school, was to feel that she was at all uncomfortable with the subject of what was *happening*. As to guilt or innocence, however—"That's for the court to decide."

What she discovered was that no one cared, not even after a blizzard of hostile publicity, and she concluded before long that what the court decided wouldn't matter, either— "Not really. Everybody knows it's just a lot of legal crap."

Barbara: "What is?"

"Oh, you know—obstruction of justice and all that."

Sparks flew.

"What do you want me to do? Make myself important by taking a stand? Making some kind of hypocritical statement? Then she'd really be disappointed—she'd have a right to be!"

"How would you feel if your father told you he'd done something that was going to cause a change in your life and then acted as if nothing had happened in his?"

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"That's a stupid accusation! I've never acted as if nothing's happened. All I've done is show her I'm not going to let it *ruin* my life."

And so on.

Pam would always dismiss my time when she came for a visit. Only this much more, Daddy, only that much more. As far as she was concerned it was over before it began.

Once she asked, "What's the first thing you're going to do when you get home?"

"See my parole officer."

"Oh, Daddy, be *serious!*"

Roger, on the other hand. From his first visit—raw windy day, too many visitors in the dayroom, first sight of me in prison khakis, etc. He was too full of the spirit to notice. Hints of his involvement in something called Total Crusade had preceded him. That day, the works.

Total Crusade was now taking up most of his free time, he said. He belonged to a "task force" which fanned out over the state on weekends to distribute literature, solicit contributions, hold rap sessions on other campuses. "But don't worry about the schoolwork, Dad. Dr. Lee's very strict. We're not allowed to miss classes, and we can't ask for make-up exams or extensions on papers."

Dr. Lee's name kept cropping up. Not to worry. "He isn't a guru or some kind of charismatic ripoff artist. 'Beware of false prophets' is the first thing he teaches. All the money we collect goes right back into the work. He doesn't have any income except from his other teaching." His other teaching turned out to be entirely off-campus. He had two degrees, in psychology and theology, but "due to a conspiracy to discredit him" no academic post. "And that's not just paranoia. One of the ways they try to get at him is through us. I've been warned myself, in a subtle way."

Barbara: "Tell your father about that."

"You know—recommendations for med school."

It seems that TC, among other things, is fighting the theory of evolution. "Oh, I know what you're thinking, Dad—crackpot fundamentalism. But listen to this: our principles have been endorsed by twenty-five of the country's leading scientists!" Most of the students in TC, he said, are in the natural and social sciences, not the humanities.

"But," I said, putting it mildly, "if you still plan to go to med

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school, you'll need recommendations from someone besides Dr. Lee, won't you?"

Tight smile, eyes bright with fanaticism: "It's not up to them to pass judgment any more. They're too compromised."

"Who is?"

University science departments, corporate and government agencies that support their research, the media. All are part of a "well orchestrated assault on human freedom" which began a hundred years ago and is now reaching "crisis stage." Evolution was and continues to be the cutting edge. Without it, there wouldn't be passive acceptance of such abominations as sex-change operations, chemotherapy, plastic surgery, organ transplants. "The aim isn't knowledge, Dad, much less help. It never was. It's *control*—total control."

So it was Total Crusade against Total Control.

Barbara looking over my head, past my shoulder, anywhere but straight at me. I could read her mind. To her this was all right wing, and I was to blame.

I tried to get back to med school but he suddenly declared that he hadn't come to talk about himself but about me. As if on cue, Barbara asked why the two of us didn't take a walk? She would stay inside where it was warm.

"I asked her to do that," he said soberly when we got outside.

"Did you?" At that moment, I suddenly realized what I missed most in him that day. His old sense of humor—which sometimes used to get on my nerves. "Any particular reason?"

"She tells me you're reading up on Lindbergh and Dillinger."

"Among other things."

He brushed the evasion aside. "No, Dad—she told me why. Don't blame her. I wanted to know."

"Well, it isn't classified information."

"I'm glad you feel that way because to me it's good news—the best! For the first time that I can remember, you're searching for something—inside. And that's why I feel that I can really talk to you for the first time."

I must have winced—frowned—something—because he said quickly, "Don't get me wrong. We were always close, closer than most of the fathers and sons that *I* knew. I never felt neglected or rejected or any of that psychological garbage. What I mean is, you always seemed so—definite. You know, the conservative politics, corpora-

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tion law, the country club. And yet nothing in the way you lived prevented *this*."

"Nothing made it inevitable, either. I had a choice."

"No, Dad." (Patiently, like a parent to a defensive child.) "When someone said, 'Perjure yourself,' you couldn't think of a convincing reason not to."

"No one ever said that to me, 'Perjure yourself.' "

"Suggested then, without words. 'Obstruct justice'—same thing. You *did* it instead of *questioning* it. That's not choice—it's, like, programming."

Couldn't answer—so many things came to mind—complexities. I just shook my head.

He went right on: "Please don't misunderstand—I'm on *your* side. Laws made by men are going to be broken by men. No matter how often you're told 'society' will be hurt, it's just an abstraction. Human beings everywhere are discovering they can't live by all these abstractions. *You* couldn't—and that's what this whole experience has shown me about you. I hadn't realized it before—I don't think *you* had—but you were spiritually starved!"

And that was his explanation of what I did and why I did it. I kept thinking (maybe in self-defense) how glib he was, how he seemed to be talking in slogans. But I said I could see he'd done a lot of thinking, he'd have to give me a little time to take it all in.

"Believe me, Dad, the answer doesn't lie in Lindbergh *or* Dillinger. That's just looking for an explanation."

"What should I be looking for?"

"Rebirth."

All of a sudden, he pulled out a pocket Bible and asked me, with touching formality, to "accept it as a gift."

I controlled an impulse to look around guiltily. "I'd like nothing better than to accept it, but—"

"The answers are all right there."

"Your mother must have explained—I can't accept anything directly. That's the rule. In prison you're guilty until proven innocent."

No more sense of humor. As stern—and kind—as my father. "Prison is separation from God—it doesn't matter where you are. Freedom is union with Him. *Those* are the real alternatives." He even said: "It's up to you."

I was strip-searched after they left. "Someone was watching while you was outside," Gene said.

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"Then they know I didn't take anything. He left the Bible in the office."

Lank smile.

I had to go to a caseworker to get the Bible released. At first the front office claimed that Roger hadn't left it, then that it had simply been misplaced. "Well," said the caseworker, "there's employee turnover here just as there is in any large organization. Things never operate as efficiently in practice as they do in theory."

"Are you telling me not to be paranoid?"

"Just to be aware of ordinary explanations."

Passages were underlined throughout. Urgent ones listed on the flyleaf. Jeremiah 17:19: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?"

Gene *in re* caseworkers: "Just remember, caseworkers are cops. If they do something for you, it's to keep you in line later on. Especially the —— psychiatric ones. First thing you know they've hung a tag on you that you can't never get rid of."

When I told Barbara I was having to use Dillinger in the library she said, "Well, is that really so terrible?"

"No," I said, "it's what they do instead of kicking you in the balls." Had to fight a feeling of contempt. Not her fault, but out of every seven hundred hours she was there maybe three. What did she know?

The caseworker assured me that this feeling was normal. "Yeah," Gene said, "it's a sign you're getting institutionalized."

Almost anything might be inflammable. Once she made a casual reference to Lindbergh's "fascism." I jumped right on it.

"With all their interest in the environment, I'm surprised liberals have never forgiven Lindbergh. After all, he was a conservationist thirty years before it became fashionable."

Tears brimming up but not spilling over: "I know what you think of my interest in the environment. We don't need to go into that again."

Gene: "Wanta know the last time my old lady come to see me? Two —— years ago. I've seen her exactly twice since I was busted—once in detention and once after I got to Lewisburg. Three months I'm laying up in detention before she hauls her ass down to see me. Said she'd been sick. Said she'd be in court, though, with the baby, which I said why don't you send me some goddamn pictures

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of her? She's mine, too. So she sent pictures but also a letter saying she don't know what she's gonna do about *us*. I wrote back and told her she better make up her mind —— fast."

They weren't married, just living together off and on for three years, which he called "the same as being married." The pictures were stolen while he was in Lewisburg by someone who wanted the frame. "Flushed down the goddamn toilet probably. They was the only pictures I had of my old lady, too."

She promised to send others but never did—and month after month didn't come to visit. She wrote that she was having trouble getting permission because of her status as "just a girl friend." But he asked one of his sisters to check and the sister learned that she *had* permission, so she was forced to set a date. "Didn't show. Wrote me a week later that she got clear up to the gate when all at once, bam! she remembered she'd left her ID at home. Lying bitch!"

Finally she did come. "She didn't bring no pictures but told me the kid was fat and healthy, which made me feel good. I asked her why she never showed up in court that time like she promised. She said the kid had been sick. I said my sister hadn't mentioned nothing like that. She said I'd better stop my —— sister from spying on her or I wouldn't see her *or* the baby ever again! Next thing I knew the hacks was dragging me out of the room. I'd have killed her! I ain't seen or heard from her since. —She looked beautiful, too," he said at the end of all this. Turned on.

Three months after Lindbergh met Anne Morrow, he proposed. She had feminist leanings of a theoretical kind but deep down expected and wanted a conventional marriage. So she found Lindbergh more unsettling than romantic. He made it clear that what he had to offer wasn't a sheltering arm but a partnership in which each would "free the other in new and different worlds."

"Don't wish me happiness," Anne wrote a friend, "it's beyond that. Wish me courage and strength and a sense of humor—I will need them all."

They were married May 27, 1929. That same spring, Beryl Dillinger sued John Dillinger, No. 13225, for divorce.

Between returning from the Navy and pulling his first bank job, Dillinger had swaggered into the house and introduced his astonished father to the "sweetest little wife in the world"—Beryl Hovius. She was sixteen, he was twenty. They had six months together. She filed for divorce during his fourth year of imprisonment.

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The Lindberghs had thirty-five years.

In 1941 he made a speech in Oklahoma City for the America First Committee. He had been speaking and writing against intervention in another European war ever since Hitler's invasion of Poland. He believed that such a war would lead to the end of Western civilization, and would result in the emergence of Russia as a superpower. What had the United States to gain by becoming embroiled?

For a while public opinion was with him, then Roosevelt's interventionist views began to prevail. By 1941, Lindbergh's former popularity was tainted with charges that he was a coward, a traitor, a secret admirer of Hitler.

When his Oklahoma City speech was announced, the entire state seethed with indignation. The city council quickly met and withdrew permission for him to use the Municipal Auditorium. His sponsors scrounged up another place the day before his arrival—a sandlot baseball park outside city limits. He was taken there under heavy guard. Special police units patrolled power lines to the park; others roamed access routes and seating areas looking for eggs, rocks, perhaps guns. Le Bourget and Paris in total reverse.

I remember that August because I was getting ready to leave for my senior year at the University of Oklahoma. Planning to enter law school the next year, paternal disappointment notwithstanding. I remember teasing him about the Lindbergh uproar: "This wouldn't be happening if Dillinger were speaking."

He claimed that he couldn't remember offering me such a choice, but said that if he had he saw no reason to take it back. Said he must have meant that Dillinger wasn't a free man, no matter how it looked. "He followed the crowd. Lindbergh never did—still don't. I'm not saying the crowd's always wrong, it just don't influence him one way or the other. He goes his own way."

I asked in amazement how he could say that Dillinger followed the crowd.

"Because that's what he done."

"Well, how do you know Lindbergh isn't just following Hitler?"

"Because he isn't."

He and my uncle disagreed on the city council's action. My uncle thought they were right; he couldn't see any free-speech issue and resorted to the usual *reductio ad absurdum*: "In other words, if Hitler wanted to come here and make a speech, you'd let him!"

"Hitler's not a U.S. citizen."

"How about Dillinger?" Me, naturally.

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He sensed a trap. "Dillinger's dead and gone."

"But suppose he wasn't?"

"Far as I'm concerned, Dillinger never earned the *right* to make a speech."

"It's not free if you have to earn it."

"Well, there's where you and me differ. Nothing's *free*. You either earn it or deserve it. Lindbergh's done both."

"Then why won't you go over to hear him?"

"Just remember you're not a lawyer yet" was his reply.

The speech went off without incident. The issue became, in fact, free speech, not Lindbergh's views. Fifteen thousand showed up, determined to let him have his say. They listened without enthusiasm, applauded just enough, left when a collection was taken up to pay expenses. The America First Committee was stuck with a $3,000 deficit—perhaps proving my father's point. He didn't say.

Probably he was more of an isolationist than he would admit in 1941. His disappointment with Lindbergh wasn't cerebral, it was visceral. The hero who had fused Europe and America wanted to undo his deed. That was his right—but where was the joy this time, the harmony, the focus? Wasn't it all mixed up with politics somehow? Those who had something to gain from his views agreed with him; those who didn't smeared him. He went his own way, of course, before Pearl Harbor and after (when he became as gung-ho as everyone else). But it was too late. "Politics" had done what not even the worst of crimes could do—blurred the clear, indisputable image, maybe forever.

Mildly unlucky for me that politics and law were permanently united in my father's mind. All my life I'd heard the terms "smart lawyer" and "crooked politician" used as if they were synonymous and generic. But I wanted to study law anyway. He conceded that I had a right to make up my own mind—on the other hand, why law? Why not (for instance) medicine, if I was set on spending all that extra time and money?

I didn't *know* why. Law attracted me, that's all. So I answered facetiously: "I want to put crooks like Dillinger and Machine Gun Kelly behind bars."

I was standing in the front of the store, looking out the plate-glass window, or trying to—every year the fly specks gathering thicker, triangles of grime creeping out a little further from the corners. He waved in the direction of the town's latest chain store, a Humpty-

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Dumpty. Half a block of familiar old houses and trees had had a great fall. "Wait'll you try putting some of the *real* crooks away, then you'll see what happens."

"If you can't lick 'em, join 'em," I said smartly—drawing on myself a stern sad look that I remember to this hour.

Gene asked once what would happen to me professionally when I got out. "They gonna, whaddya call it, disbar you?"

"Well, there'll be a hearing, but—" Didn't finish the sentence, didn't have to.

"Yeah, well, in that case," he said with his wolfish smile, "it's lucky you didn't do nothing serious."

(He was in for auto theft, three to five—not his first offense.)

Lindbergh: "I divide things done by men into two groups; those that must conform to natural laws (such as the design of an airplane) and those that are not bound by any more discipline than comes from the ideas and arguments of man himself. How enlightening it is to compare the streamline of an airplane to the awkward, complicated, and conflicting chapters of a law book. The success of one is measured by nature, while the value of the other is estimated by partisan men."

(He was trying to make out a will.)

My father lived long enough to see me become a partner in my own law firm, lived long enough to get acquainted with his grandchildren. Cancer, not Humpty-Dumpty, finally closed the store. At his funeral my uncle said shyly, "He was mighty proud of you."

I said I very much hoped so.

"Funny thing, he used to couldn't stand lawyers—he got that from Papa, I believe. But after you done so well, I never heard him say another word. Well, that's how it goes."

Maybe. I feel sure, though, that if he were alive now he wouldn't hit the sawdust trail in my defense, or even so much as say privately, "You got a raw deal."

I was wrong to disparage Barbara's interest in the environment, though it's true she took it up only after it became the thing to do. My objection, however, wasn't that it was liberal chic but that her actions made no difference. While she and her friends were driving five miles to the recycling center to turn in shopping bags of empties,

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the container industry was turning out sixty billion disposables a year. Sixty billion!

Her answer was always the same: "You don't understand symbolic gestures."

I was in segregation at the State Pen for three weeks while hearings before a disciplinary board dragged on. They asked me if I thought I'd been misled. I said, "No. I can't honestly blame anyone except myself." But in the end I was sent back to Acorn Hill, while Gene and the other "ringleaders" were scattered to other places.

Gene once said to me, "I don't think I can hack it here, know what I mean? I don't think I'll ever finish my jolt unless I go back to max." I didn't find out for sure, but I suppose he got his wish. He couldn't handle "freedom."

Barbara's only comment on my involvement was: "Someone asked you to look the other way, and you did."

When I got back, all my books had disappeared, including the ones in the library. They'd been stored in a footlocker along with some other things. Someone had jimmied the lock. To make it look good, a spring exerciser had also disappeared.

I'd put my notes in with my stationery—they were overlooked. I left them there, didn't look at them again. Brought them out the same way, haven't looked at them till now.

Last night I suggested a separation. Said I'd get an apartment. "Later we'll talk about divorce."

She said with the kids gone, there was no need for me to move out. "You take the upstairs, I'll take the downstairs. We can very easily stay out of each other's way."

I offered her a clear choice, and she immediately muddied it.

From the letter Kelly wrote Urschel: "A person in prison can't help being haunted by a vision of life as it used to be. At such times I pay, with a sense of overwhelming melancholy, my tributes to it. I don't really believe it can ever be like that again—but you bet your last oil-well George Kelly won't lose any sleep over that."

He died in prison at age 59. Heart attack. In his later years he took up Bible study. He became an expert without ever becoming religious.

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a distinguished reprint by

PETER LOVESEY

Pam had bought Cliff a special pair of bottle-green French pajamas without buttons and with an elasticated waistband. They were waiting on his pillow, washed and ironed, each time he came. He was very appreciative. He never failed to arrive with a bottle of cider that they drank with the meal. Once or twice he mentioned that he would have taken her out to a restaurant if her cooking had not been so excellent that it would have shown up the cook.

"The Secret Lover" won the Crime Writers' Association award (in England) for the best crime short story of 1985 and appears in a collection of stories by Peter Lovesey, Butchers and Other Stories of Crime, *published in December by The Mysterious Press . . .*

THE SECRET LOVER

by PETER LOVESEY

"Pam."

"Yes?"

"Will you see him this weekend?"

Pam Meredith drew a long breath and stifled the impulse to scream. She knew exactly what was coming. "See who?"

"Your secret lover."

She summoned a coy smile, said, "Give over!" and everyone giggled.

For some reason, that last session of the working week regularly turned three efficient medical receptionists into overgrown schoolgirls. They were all over thirty, too. As soon as they arrived at the

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health center on Saturday morning, they were into their routine. After flexing their imaginations with stories of what the doctors had been getting up to with the patients, they started on each other. Then it was never long before Pam's secret lover came up.

He was an inoffensive, harassed-looking man in his late thirties who happened to walk into the center one afternoon to ask for help. A piece of grit had lodged under his left eyelid. Not one of the doctors or the district nurse had been in the building at the time, so Pam had dealt with it herself.

From her own experiences with contact lenses, she had a fair idea how to persuade the eye to eject a foreign body, and she had succeeded very quickly, without causing the patient any serious discomfort. He had thanked her and left in a rush, as if the episode had embarrassed him. Pam had thought no more about him until a fortnight later, when she came on duty and was told that a man had been asking for her personally and would be calling back at lunchtime. This, understandably, created some lively interest in Reception, particularly when he arrived at five minutes to one carrying a bunch of daffodils.

At thirty-three, Pam was the second youngest of the medical receptionists. She exercised, dieted, and tinted her hair blonde, and she was popular with many of the men who came in to collect their prescriptions, but she was not used to floral tributes. In her white overall she thought of herself as clinical and efficient. She had a pale, oval face, with brown eyes and a small, neat mouth that she had been told projected refinement rather than sensuality. Lately she had noticed some incipient wrinkles on her neck and taken to wearing polo sweaters.

Under the amused and frankly envious observation of her colleagues, Pam had blushingly accepted the flowers, trying to explain that such a tribute was not necessary, charming as it was. However, when the giver followed it up by asking her to allow him to buy her a drink at the Green Dragon, she had found him difficult to refuse. She had stuttered something about being on duty after lunch, so he had suggested tomato juice or bitter lemon, and one of the other girls had given her an unseen nudge and planted her handbag in her hand.

That was the start of the long-running joke about Pam's secret lover.

Really the joke was on the others. They hadn't guessed it in their

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wildest fantasies, but things had developed to the extent that Pam now slept with him regularly.

Do not assume too much about the relationship. In the common understanding of the word, he was not her lover. Sleeping together and making love are not of necessity the same thing. The possibility was not excluded, yet it was not taken as the automatic consequence of sharing a bed, and that accorded well with Pam's innate refinement.

So it wasn't entirely as the girls in the health center might have imagined it. Pam had learned over that first tomato juice in the Green Dragon that Cliff had a job in the cider industry which entailed calling on various producers in the West Midlands and South-West and visiting Hereford for an overnight stay once a fortnight. He liked traveling, yet he admitted that the nights away from home had been instrumental in the failure of his marriage. He had not been unfaithful, but, as he altruistically put it, anyone who read the accounts of rapes and muggings in the papers couldn't really blame a wife who sought companionship elsewhere when her husband spent every other week away on business.

Responding to his candor, Pam had found herself admitting that she, too, was divorced. The nights, she agreed, were the worst. Even in the old cathedral city of Hereford, which had no reputation for violence, she avoided going out alone after dark and she often lay awake listening acutely in case someone was tampering with the locks downstairs.

The first lunchtime drink had led to another when Cliff was next in the city. The fortnight after, Pam had invited him to the house for a "spot of supper," explaining that it was no trouble, because you could do much more interesting things cooking for two than alone. Cliff had heaped praise on her chicken cordon bleu, and after that the evening meal had become a fortnightly fixture.

On the first occasion, Cliff had quite properly returned to his hotel at the end of the evening, but the following time he had introduced Pam to the old-fashioned game of cribbage, and they had both got so engrossed that neither of them had noticed the time until it was well after midnight. By then, Pam felt so relaxed and safe with Cliff that it had seemed the most natural thing in the world to make up the spare bed for him and invite him to stay the night. There had been no suggestion on either side of a more intimate arrangement. That was what she liked about Cliff. He wasn't one of those predatory males. He was enough of a gentleman to suppress his natural phys-

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ical instincts. And one night six weeks after, in a thunderstorm, when she had tapped on his bedroom door and said she was feeling frightened, he had offered in the same gentlemanly spirit to come to her room until the storm abated. As it happened, Pam still slept in the king-size bed she had got used to when she was married, so there was room for Cliff without any embarrassment about inadvertent touching. They had fallen asleep listening for the thunder.

By then it was the season of summer storms, so next time he had come to the house they had agreed that it was a sensible precaution to sleep together even when the sky was clear. You could never be certain when a storm might blow up during the night. And when the first chill nights of autumn arrived, neither of them liked the prospect of sleeping apart between cool sheets. Besides, as Cliff considerately mentioned, using one bed was less expensive on the laundry.

Speaking of laundry, Pam took to washing out his shirts, underclothes, and pajamas. She had bought him a special pair of bottle-green French pajamas without buttons and with an elasticated waistband. They were waiting on his pillow, washed and ironed, each time he came. He was very appreciative. He never failed to arrive with a bottle of cider that they drank with the meal. Once or twice he mentioned that he would have taken her out to a restaurant if her cooking had not been so excellent that it would have shown up the cook. He particularly relished the cooked breakfast on a large oval plate that she supplied before he went on his way in the morning.

So Pam staunchly tolerated the teasing in the health center, encouraged by the certainty that it was all fantasy on their part—she had been careful never to let them know that she had invited Cliff home. She was in a better frame of mind as she walked home that lunchtime. It was always a relief to get through Saturday morning.

As she turned the corner of her street, she saw a small car, a red Mini, outside her house, with someone sitting inside it. She wasn't expecting a visitor. She strolled toward her gate, noticing that it was a woman, who made no move to get out and whom she didn't recognize, so she passed the car and let herself indoors.

There was a letter on the floor, a greeting card by the look of it. She had quite forgotten that her birthday was on Sunday. Living alone, with no family to speak of, she tended to ignore such occasions. However, someone had evidently decided that this one should not

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go by unremarked. She didn't recognize the handwriting and the postmark was too faint to read. She opened it and smiled. A print of a single daffodil, and inside, under the printed birthday greeting, the handwritten letter C.

The reason she hadn't recognized Cliff's writing was that this was the first time she had seen it. He wasn't one for sending letters. And the postmark wouldn't have given Pam a clue even if she had deciphered it, because she didn't know where he lived. He was vague or dismissive when it came to personal information, so she hadn't pressed him. He was entitled to his privacy. She couldn't help wondering sometimes, and her best guess was that since the failure of his marriage he had tended to neglect himself and his home and devote himself to his job. He lived for the traveling and, Pam was encouraged to believe, his fortnightly visit to Hereford.

Presently the doorbell chimed. Pam opened the door to the woman she had seen in the car, dark-haired, about her own age or a little older, good-looking, with one of those long, elegant faces with high cheekbones that you see in foreign films. She was wearing a dark-blue suit and white blouse buttoned to the neck, as if she were attending an interview for a job. Mainly, Pam was made aware of the woman's grey-green eyes that scrutinized her with an interest unusual in people who called casually at the door.

"Hello," said Pam.

"Mrs. Pamela Meredith?"

"Yes."

The look became even more intense. "We haven't met. You may not even know that I exist. I'm Tracey Gibbons." She paused for a reaction.

Pam smiled faintly. "You're right. I haven't heard your name before."

Tracey Gibbons sighed and shook her head. "I'm not surprised. I don't know what you're going to think of me, coming to your house like this, but it's reached the point when something has to be done. It's about your husband."

Pam frowned. "My husband?" She hadn't heard from David in six years.

"May I come in?"

"I suppose you'd better."

As she showed the woman into her front room, Pam couldn't help wondering if this was a confidence trick. The woman's eyes blatantly surveyed the room, the furniture, the ornaments, everything.

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Pam said sharply, "I think you'd better come to the point, Miss Gibbons."

"Mrs., actually. Not that it matters. I'm waiting for my divorce to come through." Suddenly the woman sounded nervous and defensive. "I'm not promiscuous. I want you to understand that, Mrs. Meredith, whatever you may think of me. And I'm not deceitful, either, or I wouldn't be here. I want to get things straight between us. I've driven over from Worcester this morning to talk to you."

Pam was beginning to fathom what this was about. Mrs. Gibbons was having an affair with David, and for some obscure reason she felt obliged to confess it to his ex-wife. Clearly the poor woman was in a state of nerves, so it was kindest to let her say her piece before gently showing her the door.

"You probably wonder how I got your address," Mrs. Gibbons went on. "He doesn't know I'm here, I promise you. It's only over the last few weeks that I began to suspect he had a wife. Certain things you notice, like his freshly ironed shirts. He left his suitcase open the last time he came, and I happened to see the birthday card he addressed to you. That's how I got your address."

Pam's skin prickled. "Which card?"

"The daffodil. I looked inside, I'm ashamed to admit. I had to know."

Pam closed her eyes. The woman wasn't talking about David at all. It was Cliff, *her* Cliff. Her head was spinning. She thought she was going to faint. She said, "I think I need some brandy."

Mrs. Gibbons nodded. "I'll join you, if I may."

When she handed over the glass, Pam said in a subdued voice, "You *are* talking about a man named Cliff?"

"Of course."

"He is not my husband."

"What?" Mrs. Gibbons stared at her in disbelief.

"He visits me sometimes."

"And you wash his shirts?"

"Usually."

"The bastard!" said Mrs. Gibbons, her eyes brimming. "The rotten, two-timing bastard! I knew there was someone else, but I thought it was his wife he was so secretive about. I persuaded myself he was unhappily married and I came here to plead with you to let him go. I could kill him!"

"How do you think I feel?" Pam blurted out. "I didn't even know there was anyone else in his life."

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"Does he keep a toothbrush and razor in your bathroom?"

"A face flannel as well."

"And I suppose you bought him some expensive aftershave?"

Pam confirmed it bitterly. In her outraged state, she needed to talk, and sharing the trouble seemed likely to dull the pain. She related how she and Cliff had met and how she had invited him home.

"And one thing led to another?" speculated Mrs. Gibbons. "When I think of what I was induced to do in the belief that I was the love of his life." She finished her brandy in a gulp.

Pam nodded. "It was expensive, too."

"Expensive?"

"Preparing three-course dinners and large breakfasts."

"I wasn't talking about cooking," said Mrs. Gibbons, giving Pam a penetrating look.

"Ah," said Pam, with a slow dip of the head, in an attempt to convey that she understood exactly what Mrs. Gibbons *was* talking about.

"Things I didn't get up to in ten years of marriage to a very athletic man," Mrs. Gibbons further confided, looking modestly away. "But you know all about it. Casanova was a boy scout compared to Cliff. God, I feel so humiliated."

"Would you like a spot more brandy, Mrs. Gibbons?"

"Why don't you call me Tracey?" suggested Mrs. Gibbons, holding out her glass. "We're just his playthings, you and I. How many others are there, do you suppose?"

"Who knows?" said Pam, seizing on the appalling possibility and speaking her thoughts aloud. "There are plenty of divorced women like you and me, living in relative comfort in what was once the marital home, pathetically grateful for any attention that comes our way. Let's face it: we're second-hand goods."

After a sobering interval, Tracey Gibbons pushed her empty glass toward the brandy bottle again and asked, "What are we going to do about him?"

"Kick him out with his toothbrush and face flannel, I suppose," Pam answered inadequately.

"So that he finds other deluded women to prey on?" said Tracey. "That's not the treatment for the kind of animal we're dealing with. Personally, I feel so angry and abused that I could kill him if I knew how to get away with it. Wouldn't you?"

Pam stared at her. "Are you serious?"

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"Totally. He's ruined my hopes and every atom of self-respect I had left. What was I to him? His bit in Worcester, his Monday-night amusement."

"And I was Tuesday night in Hereford," Pam added bleakly, suddenly given a cruel and vivid understanding of the way she had been used. Sex was Monday, supper Tuesday. In her own way, she felt as violated as Tracey. An arrangement that had seemed to be considerate and beautiful was revealed as cynically expedient. The reason why he had never touched her was that he was always sated after his night of unbridled passion in Worcester. "Tracey, if you know of a way to kill him," she stated with the calm that comes when a crucial decision is made, "I know how to get away with it."

Tracey's eyes opened very wide.

Pam made black coffee and sandwiches and explained her plan. To describe it as a plan is perhaps misleading, because it had only leapt to mind as they were talking. She wasn't given to thinking much about murder. Yet as she spoke, she sensed excitedly that it could work. It was simple, tidy, and within her capability.

The two women talked until late in the afternoon. For the plan to work, they had to devise a way of killing without mess. The body should not be marked by violence. They solemnly debated various methods of despatching a man. Whether the intention was serious or not, Pam found that just talking about it was a balm for the pain Cliff had inflicted on her. She and Tracey sensibly agreed to take no action until they had each had time to adjust to the shock, but they were adamant that they would meet again.

On the following Monday evening, Pam received a phone call from Tracey. "Have you thought any more about what we were discussing?"

"On and off, yes," Pam answered guardedly.

"Well, I've been doing some research," Tracey told her with the excitement obvious in her voice. "I'd better not be too specific over the phone, but I know where to get some stuff that will do the job. Do you understand me?"

"I think so."

"It's simple, quick, and very effective—and the best thing about it is that I can get it at work."

Pam recalled that Tracey had said she worked for a firm that manufactured agricultural fertilizers. She supposed she was talking about some chemical substance.

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Poison.

"The thing is," Tracey was saying, "if I get some, are you willing to do your part? You said it would be no problem."

"That's true, but—"

"By the weekend? He's due to visit me on Monday."

The reminder of Cliff's Monday assignations in Worcester was like a stab of pain to Pam. "By the weekend," she confirmed emphatically. "Come over about the same time on Saturday. I'll do my part, I promise you, Tracey."

The part Pam had to play in the killing of Cliff was to obtain a blank death certificate from one of the doctors at the center. She had often noticed how careless Dr. Holt-Wagstaff was with his paperwork. He was the oldest of the five practitioners and his desk was always in disorder. She waited for her opportunity for most of the week. On Friday morning she had to go into his surgery to ask him to clarify his handwriting on a prescription form. The death-certificate pad was there on the desk. At twelve-fifteen, when he went out on his rounds, and Pam was on duty with one other girl, she slipped back into the surgery. No one saw her.

Saturday was a testing morning for Pam. The time dragged and the teasing about her secret lover was difficult to take without snapping back at the others. She kept wondering whether Dr. Holt-Wagstaff had noticed anything. She need not have worried. He left at noon, wishing everyone a pleasant weekend. At twelve-thirty, the girls locked up and left.

When Pam got home, Tracey was waiting on her doorstep. "I came by train," she explained. "Didn't want to leave my car outside again. It's surprising how much people notice."

"Sensible," said Pam with approval as she opened the door. "Now I want to hear about the stuff you've got. Is it really going to work?"

Tracey put her hand on Pam's arm. "Darling, it's foolproof. Do you want to see it?" She opened her handbag and took out a small brown glass bottle. "Pure nicotine. We use it at work."

Pam held the bottle in her palm. "Nicotine? Is it a poison?"

"Deadly."

"There isn't much here."

"The fatal dose is measured in milligrams, Pam. A few drops will do the trick."

"How can we get him to take it?"

"I've thought of that." Tracey smiled. "You're going to like this.

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In a glass of his own buckshee cider. Nicotine goes yellow on exposure to light and air, and there's a bitter taste which the sweet cider will mask."

"How does it work?"

"It acts as a massive stimulant. The vital organs simply can't withstand it. He'll die of cardiac arrest in a very short time. Did you get the death certificate?"

Pam placed the poison bottle on the kitchen table and opened one of her cookbooks. The certificate was inside.

"You're careful, too," Tracey said with a conspiratorial smile. She delved into her handbag again. "I brought a prescription from my doctor to copy the signature, as you suggested. What else do we have to fill in here? *Name of deceased.* What shall we call him?"

"Anything but Cliff," said Pam. "How about Clive? Clive Jones."

"All right. Clive Jones it is. *Date of death.* I'd better fill that in after the event. What shall we put as the cause of death? Cardiac failure?"

"No, that's likely to be a sudden death," said Pam, thinking of post-mortems. "Broncho-pneumonia is better."

"Suits me," said Tracey, writing it down. "After he's dead, I take this to the Registry of Births, Marriages, and Deaths in Worcester and tell them that Clive Jones was my brother, is that right?"

"Yes, it's very straightforward. They'll want his date of birth and one or two other details that you can invent. Then they issue you with another certificate that you show to the undertaker. He takes over after that."

"I ask for a cremation, of course. Will it cost much?"

"Don't worry," said Pam. "He can afford it."

"Too true!" said Tracey. "His wallet is always stuffed with notes."

"He never has to spend much," Pam pointed out. "The way he runs his life, he gets everything he wants for nothing."

"The bastard," said Tracey with a shudder.

"You really mean to do it, don't you?"

Tracey stood up and looked steadily at Pam with her grey-green eyes. "On Monday evening when he comes to me. I'll phone you when it's done."

Pam linked her arm in Tracey's. "The first thing I'm going to do is burn those pajamas."

Tracey remarked, "He never wore pajamas with me."

"Really?" Pam hesitated, her curiosity aroused. "What exactly did he do with you? Are you able to talk about it?"

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"I don't believe I could," answered Tracey with eyes lowered.

"If I poured you a brandy? We *are* in this together now."

"All right," said Tracey with a sigh.

Sunday seemed like the longest day of Pam's life, but she finally got through it. On Monday she didn't go in to work. That evening, she waited nervously by the phone from six-thirty onward.

The call came at a few minutes after seven. Pam snatched up the phone.

"Hello, darling." *The voice was Cliff's.*

"Cliff?"

"Yes. Not like me to call you on a Monday, is it? The fact is, I happen to be in Worcester on my travels and it occurred to me that I could get over to you in Hereford in half an hour if you're free this evening."

"Has something happened?" asked Pam.

"No, my darling. Just a change of plans. I won't expect much of a meal."

"That's good, because I haven't got one for you," Pam candidly told him.

There was a moment's hesitation before he said, "Are you all right, dear? You don't sound quite yourself."

"Don't I?" said Pam flatly. "Well, I've had a bit of a shock. My sister died here on Saturday. It wasn't entirely unexpected. Bronchopneumonia. I've had to do everything myself. She's being cremated on Wednesday."

"Your sister? Pam, darling, I'm terribly sorry. I didn't even know you had a sister."

"Her name was Olive, Olive Jones," said Pam, and she couldn't help smiling at her own resourcefulness. After she had poisoned Tracey with a drop of nicotine in her brandy, all it had wanted on the death certificate was a touch of the pen. "We weren't close. I'm not too distressed. Yes, why don't you come over?"

"You're sure you want me?"

"Oh, I want you," answered Pam. "Yes, I definitely want you."

When she had put down the phone, she didn't go to the fridge to see what food she had in there. She went upstairs to the bedroom and changed into a black-lace negligee.

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"Are you Jewish?" Mr. Gross asked. Henry was taken aback. What was that supposed to mean?

"My parents were," he said.

Charles Ardai is a young New Yorker who entered Columbia University as a freshman in September, a fact we hope won't keep him too busy to provide us with more such tight short fiction as this . . .

THE LONG DAY

by CHARLES ARDAI

Henry Todmann was terribly surprised when he opened the door to apartment F-7. He had phoned from a pay phone across the street and had let Mr. Gross's phone ring fourteen times. At the fifteenth ring he had hung up—obviously no one was home.

But when Henry entered the apartment, he found that someone *was* home. Seated at a desk in the darkened studio apartment, the area around him sparsely lit by a table lamp, was a thin man peering at a large book. The man didn't look up immediately upon Henry's entrance, and for a moment Henry entertained the notion of running out. Before Henry could make up his mind, the man slowly and calmly raised his head. His stare was piercing but not threatening. Otherwise he remained motionless. Henry tried to get a glimpse of the man's legs. If the man were crippled, Henry knew he might still be able to pull the job.

Some of Henry's confidence returned. If the man could have done anything, he would have already done it. Henry pulled his lockpicks from Mr. Gross's bottom lock and shut the door behind him. When the man spoke, Henry was startled.

"Hello," he said. His voice was straightforward and pleasant. "I am Emile Gross. You are?"

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Henry looked at Gross, whose voice was too measured for him to have been scared into immobility (Henry had run into enough cases of that to know what a terrified voice sounded like). "You are?" Emile Gross repeated.

"None of your business." Henry looked around. Except for the area illuminated by the desk lamp, the apartment was steeped in darkness. He reached for the light switch by the door.

"Are you Jewish?" Mr. Gross asked. Henry was taken aback. What was that supposed to mean?

There was no point in lying. "My parents were," Henry said.

"Then wait a moment." Henry didn't move, his hand poised at the switch. Gross looked at his watch for a few seconds. "All right. Let there be light," he said.

A large ceiling light came on at the word "be." Henry let his hand drop to his side. He wondered how Gross had activated the lights. Henry hadn't seen him move—but then again, it had been dark. Henry moved closer—and saw that a plastic sheet covered Gross's legs and that his chair was fitted with wheels and a motorized drive system. So he *was* a cripple.

Henry scanned the apartment for items of value. Beneath the room's single, shaded window was a television set, but it was far too large for Henry to cart off. A dresser stood next to the television. Henry walked toward it, never taking his eyes off Gross. "What was that you asked about my being Jewish?"

Gross smiled briefly. "It's Yom Kippur. Jews are not allowed to work. If you are a professional burglar, you obviously don't keep the holiday, but as long as a Jew is in my house, he follows my rules."

Henry opened the top drawer of the dresser and tossed its contents onto the floor. He found two silver candlesticks which he put into a pouch at his waist.

"I am a mechanical engineer," Gross continued. "The lights were programmed to go on exactly one minute after someone walked through the door." That answered one question. Gross looked at his watch again. "They were right on time. My mother gave those candlesticks to me, incidentally. For my *bar mitzvah*."

"Happy birthday," Henry said. Something dawned on him. "Is that why you didn't answer the phone, because it's Yom Kippur?" He started to ransack the second drawer.

"Yes. And it's why I didn't turn on the lights. I programmed them yesterday, before sundown. No labor is allowed on Yom Kippur, and

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answering the phone and turning on the lights count as labor. It is why I am not interfering with you."

"I was never very religious," Henry said as he turned the third drawer onto the floor. He picked up a camera in a leather case and put it in his pouch. "If you ask me, it's rubbish, but if it keeps you from stopping me, I love it. And you won't be able to call the police afterward, right?"

"No," Gross said, "I won't be able to call anyone."

"So I could have come in and hurt your wife and neither of you would do anything about it."

"I'm not married."

"But if you were."

"It is not forbidden to break the rules of Yom Kippur in order to stave off physical attack."

"But as long as I don't touch you?" Henry asked.

"The rules are clear. My material possessions are not as important as my faith."

"Glad to hear it." Henry was through with the dresser and moved carefully to the desk. "Now for the real question: where's your money?"

"I hope you don't expect me to tell you."

Henry searched the desktop. The book Gross had been reading was a prayer book with the title *Gates of Prayer* emblazoned across the top of each page. Henry opened the single drawer and pulled out an address book. He thought of taking it with him and hitting Gross's acquaintances, but decided that just because Gross was a fanatic, it didn't mean his acquaintances were.

Gross had to be crazy, Henry thought, letting a guy come in and rob him blind just because it was a holiday. Henry had gone to Hebrew school in his day, but he retained little of what he'd learned. He knew, though, that the Torah didn't mention sitting around while someone broke into your house.

He didn't find any cash in or on the desk and he frisked Gross roughly. Coming up with nothing, he complained, "So what's this? You're not allowed to carry money on Yom Kippur?"

"You're not allowed to spend money, no."

"I didn't ask that," Henry said. "*Where's your money?*" He lifted his hand to slap Gross. As he swung his hand down, Gross shot his own hand out and caught Henry's. For an instant, terror gripped Todmann. Gross's passivity had led him to drop his guard. The man wasn't harmless. In fact, he could be insane.

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"Okay," Henry said, shaken, "I won't touch you."

"No," said Gross. "You won't." He released Henry's hand.

Henry stepped back. There was one other chair in the room, an armchair by the door across from the desk, and he went to it and sat down, glaring fiercely at Gross. "I'm going to find out where you keep your money if I have to take this place apart. I can do it, you know. It's a small apartment, and I've got plenty of time before the sun goes down again."

Gross smiled. "So you remember something about the rules."

"I know everything about them. And I know that you're going to stick to them, because your type always does. So go ahead and sit tight, but you might as well tell me where you keep your cash because if you don't I'll tear this place up piece by piece."

"If you must."

"I will," Henry threatened.

He looked around and wondered where to look first. He would search the place if he had to, but the sooner he got out of the apartment the better. He tried to put himself in Gross's place. If he were Gross, where would he put his money?

How the hell should I know? he answered himself. I'm not nuts. He probably keeps it at his synagogue.

Gross glanced at his watch again. "What?" Henry asked, suspicious. "Are you expecting someone?"

"No. I'm not expecting anyone."

"Good. Listen, clown, you've got till I count to five to tell me where your money is or I'll tear this room apart." Henry counted to five and received no response. He stood.

"Sit, sit," Gross said. "I'll tell you." *That* was the voice of someone scared. "Please sit." Henry sat. "I keep my money behind some of the panels of the wall. To keep it safe."

"Of course." Henry looked around. Every wall in the room was paneled. "Which panels?"

"Well," Gross said, "the one behind you, for instance." Henry jumped up again, but could find no way of opening the panel.

"How does it open?"

"It's preprogrammed," Gross said with pride, "to open after someone sits in that chair for a full minute."

"Don't play games with me!" Henry yelled. "If that were true, it would open every time anyone came to see you and sat down here."

"I don't get many visitors." Henry could believe that. "Try it. You'll see."

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Henry sat in the chair and fidgeted uncomfortably. Gross checked his watch.

"So that's why you were looking at your watch," Henry said. "You were afraid it would open accidentally."

Gross nodded and studied the time.

"If you're lying to me—" Henry muttered.

"Oh, don't worry," Gross said. "—All right, lift your arms, please." Henry lifted his arms.

As he did, the arms of his chair swung diagonally in on concealed hinges and locked together over his chest like a metal harness. He gasped and tried to stand, but the restraint held his upper body stationary and the chair was firmly attached to the floor. "You bastard!" he screamed. "Let me out!"

The realization of his stupidity settled on him in a flash. He saw how he had been manipulated. Now Gross could keep him there until sundown and then call the police. But he wouldn't be able to make any charges stick! Henry would tell the police he had come over to talk to Gross on business and that Gross had trapped him! He'd tell them Gross set it up so he'd look like a robber—they'd realize Gross was crazy as soon as they talked to him!

From behind him, Henry heard the tinny hum of a motor drive. He craned his head to look, and saw in the corner of his vision the wall panel behind the chair rising. He turned back to Gross. Maybe the guy hadn't been lying. Maybe the restraint was just a precaution for those rare occasions when he did have a visitor who sat in one place for too long—Gross was exactly the sort to set up such a system!

"Look," Henry said, forcing a smile, "I didn't—"

A second motor whined to life, and a moment later Henry felt a cold pressure on the base of his neck. His smile disappeared, his mouth suddenly felt very dry, and when he tried to speak he couldn't. The cold metal moved up the back of his neck until it reached his temples and then clamped painfully over his ears. Henry stretched his hands up painfully but was unable to pry the iron earphones from his head. He tried to separate the arms of the chair but they didn't budge.

Gross cleared his throat and the sound echoed through Henry's head. "Now," Gross said, "we have to talk."

Henry coughed for air. "You can't make any charges stick," he whispered. "You're crazy."

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"In that panel behind your head is a tape recorder. The authorities will hear everything you said since you came in." Henry tried to turn his head but choked, each cough exploding in his ears.

"Please," he gasped. "Give me some water." Gross ignored him. "For God's sake—"

Gross looked down at his book. "For God's sake?" He shook his head as his words faded slowly from the headset. "You *have* forgotten. On Yom Kippur, neither food nor drink is permitted."

"I'm *choking*," Henry said.

"You'll live." Gross closed the prayer book with a loud snap. "Yom Kippur is the day of atonement, when we are forgiven for our sins. But first we must repent. I forgive you your sins—do you repent?"

Henry muttered a response.

"Do you repent?"

"I repent!" Henry shouted.

"No," Gross said, "you do not repent."

He opened *Gates of Prayer* again. "In any case," he continued, "it is not enough to repent for your sins against me. You must also atone for your sins against God, for having renounced your faith." He flipped through the book until he came to a page marked with a red-cloth bookmark. He looked up and fixed his gaze on Henry.

"In Hungarian," he said, "Yom Kippur is called *hosszu nap,* 'the long day.' Do you know why?" Henry didn't answer. Gross repeated his question louder. Henry winced.

"No."

Gross looked at his watch and smiled a broad, serene smile. "Don't worry," he said. "You will."

ON OUR COVER

Jake "The Snake" Roberts, 6′5″, 249 pounds, is one of the top stars in the World Wrestling Federation. He enters the ring carrying his pet python, Damien, which he uses for a psychological advantage as well as for draping it over beaten opponents. Depending on his opponent, Jake can either wrestle scientifically or brawl. He is presently pursuing the WWF intercontinental title.

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They talked of Angelo, and Nicole asked if Joaquim had left a girl friend behind.

There was one woman, he told her, a touriste. *"Many tourists come to my city, but she was different. I loved her. And she loved me, too. But she said we couldn't marry because I was too young. She was an American. Last summer I waited for her to return, but she didn't. I wrote her letters. I was very lonely—Angelo was in Paris then, where you met him."*

A sinister first published fiction from Joel Redon, twenty-five, who has studied writing in Morocco with Paul Bowles and in New York with Elizabeth Pollet. He worked for several years on The Village Voice *and now resides in San Francisco, where he is writing a book,* Living Through a War, *about AIDS and the culture of the Eighties . . .*

ANGELO'S FRIEND

by JOEL REDON

"Angelo has always been very important to me," said Nicole. "I mean, that's why I go back there every summer. I don't have to teach summer school." She looked at the young man seated across from her and he smiled at her encouragingly, then gazed past her out the window. It was early in the morning, his first full day in America. He lit a cigarette and smoked it as he thought.

Nicole Sykes tried to imagine it was Angelo who was visiting her. But she was glad to have his friend Joaquim there. Living in New York, it was easy to forget you were lonely. And Nicole, now thirty-two, could use the company. In a letter Angelo had written her only a month before, he'd asked if she would be willing to sponsor Joaquim's entry into the United States and she'd agreed immediately—he could stay with her for two weeks, until he had time to

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find a job and an inexpensive hotel where he could live. She had also given him money when he arrived and told him to feel at home in her apartment. If Angelo loved him, so could she.

While she dressed that morning, she could hear Joaquim in the kitchen, washing dishes and cleaning the countertops. She smiled to herself. It was pleasant to have him there. When she came out into the big room, she found him examining the masks and pictures on the walls. Later she noticed he held some of her books almost reverently and she was touched.

"What shall we do today?" she asked him. "Do you want to go to Central Park?"

Joaquim shook his head. "I'd like to go out by myself," he said. "And walk."

She gave him a key to the apartment, and wrote her address on a slip of paper for him to carry in his pocket.

When he had gone, she sat down on the sofa and wrote, "My dearest Angelo, I feel terribly cut off from you. It seems too long since you've written me. But that's unimportant at the moment. What is important is that Joaquim has arrived and I know you'll be glad to hear he arrived safely. He is a very nice person—but of course he is, being your best friend. Once he gets to know the city better, I'll take him around to a few friends, one of whom owns a restaurant and occasionally hires people who don't have green cards. But Joaquim will need to attend to his legal status before too long. Apparently, he has only a visitor's visa. It's all very complicated to me, actually. But don't worry—I'll let you know how everything is coming along. Angelo, dear heart, do write to me. Many blessings, and—"

She stopped writing and placed the notebook at her side. Then she closed her eyes and, in an unaccustomed way, she fell asleep.

She was awakened by the sound of a key, her key, in the lock. It startled her.

"What an adventure!" Joaquim said as he shut the door behind him and flopped down on the couch beside her. At great length, in his faintly odd accent, he described all he'd seen, and later when they ate dinner in the small kitchen he told her of his hopes for his new life in America.

"I'll never go back to France," he said earnestly. "I want the kind of freedom to be had here."

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They talked of Angelo, and Nicole asked if Joaquim had left a girl friend behind.

"There was one woman," he said. "My family did not like her, but they never stopped me from seeing her because they thought she was giving me money. She was a *touriste*." He put down his fork and looked at her in a gentle, smiling way. "Many tourists come to my city, but she was different. I loved her. And she loved me, too. But she said we couldn't marry because I was too young. She was an American. Last summer I waited for her to return, but she didn't. I wrote her letters. I was very lonely—Angelo was in Paris then, where you met him."

"I hope New York will be better for you," Nicole said.

"I want to be happy, yes," he said, "and not always worry about making money." He took her empty plate from the table and placed it with his own in the sink. Sitting down again, he offered her a cigarette, which she refused. He lit one for himself. "So what do you like to do?" he asked. He sounded to Nicole like a nicely polite child. She smiled and told him of her interest in archeology.

"Wonderful!" he said. "Me, I like to go running in the morning. I like to go out into the countryside and lie on the grass. I could sleep in the sun forever."

It was very late when they grew tired of talking. Nicole put clean sheets on his bed in the small room next to hers—he had arrived very late the night before and slept in a chair at the airport—then she kissed him on the forehead and said goodnight. As she turned to leave, he caught her sleeve. "There is something important I have to ask you," he said. "I want to live in New York forever. But I am worried the Government will send me back. I want to be a citizen, but it is impossible, I know. And I don't want to be always hiding, hiding."

Nicole took his hand. "You'll have to keep a low profile, that's all. A lot of people are able to live here for a long time."

He looked at his feet dejectedly. "There is one way," he said.

"How?"

"If I could marry you, Nicole, I would be a legal citizen." He looked up. "But we would never have to *see* one another. I could get a job and live my life, maybe not even in New York. Then we could get a divorce."

Nicole sighed. She felt old and heavy. "Let me think about it, Joaquim, all right?"

"Thank you," he said. "But you don't have to, it's all right."

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"I suppose it does happen frequently, all this?"

"Yes," he said eagerly. "All over the world." He smiled at her.

The ceremony itself was a simple signing and exchanging of papers. Nicole had bought a silk scarf for herself and for Joaquim a fine suit. He looked handsome in it, and as they walked through Soho and Little Italy that afternoon he told her again and again how happy he was. It had been only a few weeks since he'd arrived and everything had turned out very pleasantly, in a rather formal and sedate way.

That night they were both tired. Nicole took a long shower and brushed her hair, then read a magazine, stretched out on the bed in her nightgown. At 10:00 there was a light knocking at the bedroom door. Before she had a chance to speak, Joaquim, completely naked, stood before her, grinning, and switched off the lights. Quietly he lay down beside her.

Nicole awakened first. She looked at Joaquim. He'd draped her scarf across his eyes to protect them from the light. Soon he began to stir. Then he yawned and pulled the silk away from his face.

"So now I am a married man," he announced with satisfaction.

"Yes—and I'm a *wife*. Imagine!"

"Why are you laughing?" He looked at her seriously.

"It's all so unexpected," she said, kissing him lightly. "I'm really very reserved. I don't make new friends very easily." She stood, put on her nightgown, and went without another word into the kitchen.

When the eggs were cooked, Joaquim was seated at the table, writing, already dressed. As she set his plate down, she looked at the paper on which he was writing. It was an application for permanent U.S. residency.

"Are you in such a hurry?" she asked, puzzled. He did not answer.

Only when he had finished signing his name, folded up the paper, placed it inside an envelope, and sealed it did he turn to his lukewarm eggs.

In the late afternoon they went food shopping. Nicole stopped by the butcher's shop and asked the old man who always served her for a whole chicken. When he gave the package to her, he said, as usual, "Thank you, love."

Before she knew what was happening, Joaquim reached across the counter and grabbed the old man by the shirt. "That's my wife you're talking to!" he shouted.

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That evening he hardly spoke to her, and when she showed him an invitation to a cocktail party that had come in that day's mail he crumpled it up and threw it at her. "I am your husband now," he said angrily. "I will make the decisions."

Over the next few weeks, a new life took shape for Nicole. In the evenings she remained at home, correcting her students' papers and wishing that time would pass more quickly. This year, more than ever before, she looked anxiously forward to the summer, so she could leave New York and visit Angelo. Her life had become almost too difficult to bear. Joaquim had turned increasingly hostile, irritable, and impolite. And Barbara, Nicole's neighbor from across the hall, informed her that she had seen Joaquim on several occasions at a restaurant near Barbara's office with a woman wearing expensive clothing and jewelry.

Nicole made an attempt to write to Angelo but gave up, facing her resentment. How could he have done this to me? she thought. Joaquim came here and married me so he'll have somewhere to live and won't have to work.

Finally, one morning as he was preparing to go out for the day, she asked him to leave. "Close your mouth!" he snarled, bunching his fist at her face.

She began to cry. "I think you'd sell your mother if you thought it would bring you any profit!" she sobbed.

When he was gone, she made several phone calls. First she spoke with the Immigration Department and was told that nothing immediate could be done. Her next call was to the police. They said he was not their problem.

Nicole finally stopped crying, and waited until it grew dark. Then, dressing in carefully selected clothes, she left the apartment.

The taxi stopped at an intersection lined with ancient brick tenements, some deserted, their windows blackened or boarded up with metal. Small groups of men stood on the corners, their wives and girl friends back on the stoops, watching the children playing in the street.

With her sunglasses firmly in place, Nicole stepped out of the cab and started walking. Several of the men called to her, but she ignored them until she heard what she had come to hear.

"Crack, cocaine, speed."

She came to a full stop and turned toward the voice.

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"Which do you want, lady?"
"Crack," she replied firmly.

At a certain time every night, if he came home at all, Joaquim would make himself something to eat and then go out again. The night after her purchase, she waited until he'd gone into the bathroom before she dropped the small packet into the inside pocket of his jacket. Then, shaking with anxiety, she made a whispered phone call to the police.

When Joaquim strode out the door a half hour later, she waited six more minutes, watching each second pass on her wristwatch, then she made her way out to the elevator and took it down to the lobby.

As the elevator doors opened, she saw at once the two men in blue holding Joaquim's hands firmly behind him. He saw her instantly, too, and yelled, "You snake! You bitch!" He tried to lunge at her.

Nicole addressed the policemen evenly. "This has been going on for a long time now. But I'm a teacher. As soon as my husband started selling crack to the young people in our neighborhood, I had to call you."

"You liar! I'll kill you! You have my word, bitch, if you ever try to come to my country, I'll—"

They led him out.

When she was asked if she would be forfeiting her summer teaching position again, Nicole informed the program director that she would not. "I want to stay in New York this summer," she said, making an excuse. "It's something I haven't done in a long while. It might be nice for a change."

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In the natural course of events, Maynard and Arnie became just another of Wingbeat's collection of odd couples, their most notable idiosyncrasy being that they never actually spoke to one another but would talk to some third party—a dog, or even a post if necessary . . .

THE EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY

by JAY A. COHEN

I was certainly surprised when the sheriff took me with him that day. I'd hinted a couple of times about wanting to ride around with him sometime, for background, atmosphere, but he'd never seemed real keen on the idea. But that morning he marched into Sal's Cafe, where I was soaking in the coffee-and-gossip ambience of small-town breakfast, and he said, "Well, Writer, you wanta go for a ride?"—just staring at me and ignoring the casual greetings from the others that usually brought out his best politicking smile and yes-I-know-your-name ribbing.

Naturally, I said sure. He turned and walked out, and I paid for breakfast and went after him. The Blazer was waiting, engine revving, and it started to move as I opened the door, so I had to hop in fast. By the time we hit the Wingbeat, Minnesota, city limits we were doing seventy, which was something of a feat when you consider that when you're in Wingbeat you're never more than a good slapshot away from the edge of town. Which is something of an exaggeration, but not much.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

He said, "We're goin' to arrest Arnie Carlson."

"Oh," I said. He looked at me sideways a moment, and then slowed down to sixty or so.

"I guess there ain't really no hurry, is there?" he said.

We rode on slow and quiet for a bit, bouncing on the narrow, frost-heaved road, watching the pine trees glide by, close-packed, with

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branches intertwining as if huddling together against the autumn cold. I was wondering why the sheriff had wanted me along and had half decided it was because he didn't want to be alone in the Blazer with Arnie.

Sheriff Emory Ngaasted, known simply as Sherf in and around Itkoochami County, looks like he stepped out of some Escape from Badman County movie, being a big, meaty fellow given to sunglasses and carrying on his substantial hip a pistol about the same size and shape as a dog's hind leg—a wolfhound's maybe, or a St. Bernard's—and he can play the crusty-old-codger role with the best of them, and the hard-ass cop, too. But there are times, when he's forgot to look around and see if anybody's watching, when he takes off those glasses and rubs at his eyes, and his face goes sad and you remember that that pistol and that badge may be clean and shiny but they're heavy, too, and the man who's wearing them is only human and a bit tired—and maybe soiled somewhere a little spit and a rag won't do much good.

"You know 'bout Arnie, do you?" he said.

"Well, I heard some talk, which isn't necessarily the same thing."

"No, it ain't. I figgered maybe you'd be interested in the rest of the story."

"Sure," I said.

It seemed Arnie grew up out on the western border of the state, out in the Red River Valley area, on the ancient, dried-up shores of Lake Agassiz. Farm country—potatoes, mostly—wide open country, with horizons that fade away into a vast emptiness and winter blizzards that close in and separate a man's hand from his face even as he wipes his nose. The kind of country that reminds a man how small and vulnerable he is to the whims of earth and sky. Not that Arnie was the type to give that much thought, but the reminder is there whether a man thinks about it or not.

Arnie's old man was a narrow, strict, puritan sort—not mean, really, but demanding. In his vocabulary, the word "vacation" didn't exist. Arnie grew up on and around the farm, driving tractor, humping potatoes, maybe getting a chance now and then to play a little pick-up hockey or hang around after a church function, listening to his friend Larry chat the girls, shying away a little himself when from time to time one of the girls would move in close to him and lay her hands like warm butterflies on his thick arms and broad shoulders.

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So he wasn't exactly deprived, his was a fairly normal farmboy life, but it wasn't until he was seventeen that he managed to escape the prairie for a little while and take a gander at a different line of country. He wangled permission to accept Larry's invitation to go deer hunting over here in Itkoochami County, where Larry's father had a cabin and forty acres of trees and swamp.

And, I suppose in a way proving his father's prejudice against travel to be correct, Arnie fell in love with trees.

He rose early in the morning to walk with slight crunchings on the hard snow and breathe in the crisp, still, pine-laden air. He sat in the almost perfect quiet, snug in his wool coat and his own little world, enclosed by the motherly verdant pines and the white birches, which stood straight and rigid like honorable old men, the grey brush tangling at their feet like sleepy children. All of it encased in soft, muffling snow that glistened in the sun and did not blow roaring into drifts, covering paths he had just shoveled clear the day before. Each tree was an individual to Arnie, a protecting friend.

He so constantly reminisced about this place that in the spring he turned eighteen, his father, being fair if strict, and remembering, if vaguely, being eighteen himself, and having enough experience with animals to know better than to try to force a cat to bark, gave Arnie fifty dollars and a bus ticket to Bearwoods, the Itkoochami county seat, and told him to come back anytime he felt like he'd got the trees out of his system. Which, of course, Arnie never did.

He got a job that summer as a dock boy at the Mikkelson Resort on Deerleg Lake, which is just fifteen miles from Wingbeat, so that on Sunday mornings in Sal's Cafe the Mikkelsons had as one of their topics of conversation the amazing willingness to work of their new dock boy—Arnie naturally finding cleaning boats and such work as nothing after humping hundred-pound sacks of potatoes.

The sheriff paused and looked at me. "Do you believe in fate?"

I said, "No, not really—despite the constant evidence to the contrary."

He stared at me a second or two longer. "Despite the evidence to the contrary. I guess that's one way to put it. Well, it just so happens that that was the summer old Maynard Hutchins' wife run off on him."

Apparently old Maynard had come home one evening after delivering a load of logs and sat down at the supper table and then noticed the house was awful quiet. He got up and couldn't find his wife anywhere, but her car was still there so he began to get worried and

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started calling the neighbors. He finally rang up Nettie Sandstrom, who must of been hard put to keep the amusement and pleasure out of her voice as she suggested he look and see if any of his wife's clothes were missing—and mentioned just in passing that wasn't it odd that Ray Brabec, the real-estate man in Wingbeat, had just turned up missing as well.

Maynard Hutchins was subsequently seen driving through town with his old Army forty-five on the dashboard and his face grim and red. A couple of days later, he came back and folks kind of kept an eye out, buying the Duluth and Minneapolis papers, waiting for the bodies to be found and the sheriff to come and arrest him. But nothing ever happened and folks didn't know whether he just hadn't ever found them or if he just didn't do anything when he did. Only Durwood Newburg, who weighs in at about two hundred and twenty pounds with none of it brains, ever had the gall to ask Maynard about it straight out—and, giant or not, he got a broken nose for his trouble.

Maynard never *had* been all that genial a fellow, but after that he got downright mean. Pretty soon the two old boys that worked with him out in the woods quit and sat around Sal's, drawing their welfare money and saying jobs may be scarce but they'd be damned if they'd take any more off that old buzzard—and saying, too, that Maynard was getting dangerous, suicidal they said, like he was just hoping that if he stood on the lee side of enough trees as he was cutting them one would sooner or later take the hint and fall on him. But what was there to do—if he wanted to kill himself over a woman, that was his business.

Still, when September came and the leaves turned and fell and folks began in earnest to get the rest of the firewood in and the Mikkelsons waved goodbye at the last of the tourists, word went around that Arnie Carlson was going to start working for Maynard and a few men took it on themselves to give the boy a word of warning, reminding him that green as he was he wouldn't know if Maynard was being reasonably careful or not. But Arnie just smiled at them and said he reckoned he'd learn. Lloyd Corcoran at the hardware store even went so far as to offer Arnie a job himself, but Arnie turned him down, saying, "Thank you, sir, but what I really want to do is work in the woods."

For a week or so, suppertime at Sal's had a little added flavor of suspense as folks waited to see whether this was the day Arnie would get fed up with Maynard's manners or one or the other of

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them would get his hand caught in the skidder chain as a result of Maynard being careless. But every night about the same time, Maynard's dented old green pickup would come rattling up to the cafe and the two men would come in and give everybody a good whiff of sweat and sawdust. Maynard would sit down and order a couple of hot roast-beef sandwiches and Arnie would go and wash his hands, then come back and sit with Maynard, neither one of them saying a word except for Arnie saying hello back to anyone who said hello to him. They'd say, how you doin' out there, how you gettin' along with this old buzzard, and Arnie'd say, fine, just fine, thank you. When they were done eating, they'd flip a quarter and the loser would get the check and they'd leave the quarter as a tip. And Maynard would drive off and Arnie would walk down to Mrs. Ruud's, where he rented a room.

Folks finally figured that a few months of trying to log all by his lonesome, which ain't really a feasible thing, had calmed Maynard down enough to make him as safe and reasonable as he ever had been, such as it was. And in the natural course of events, more interesting topics came to the fore and Maynard and Arnie became just another of Wingbeat's collection of odd couples, their most notable idiosyncrasy being that they never actually spoke to one another but would talk to some third party—a dog, or even a post if necessary.

For example, if Arnie wanted the ketchup and Maynard had it, Arnie'd say to someone at the next table, "These taters could sure do with some ketchup," and Maynard would pass it.

Even out in the woods they'd do it. Darryl Laplant, on whose land they were logging that first winter, remembers dropping by where they were working and hearing Maynard yelling at the top of his voice at the skidder, "You bedamned machine, don't you dare run outa fuel!" and pretty soon Arnie showing up with a five-gallon can of diesel.

So that's how things were for a few years, the logging business not exactly booming but Maynard managing to find enough buyers to keep going, make the payments on the equipment, keep food on the table, and pay Arnie enough so he moved out to the old Guthrie cabin on the edge of town and bought himself a nice rod and reel for fishing on the Owl River in the summer and a new Remington deer rifle for anytime they weren't working in the fall—and, some said, into the winter as well. But then, he wasn't the only fellow around Wingbeat who had a twelve-legged deer in his freezer, so it tended more to include him in society than otherwise.

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Even old Maynard relaxed enough to begin spending a few evenings in the Thirsty Mosquito, drinking a few beers and answering when spoken to, even if it was generally to disagree—him and Arnie sitting side by side and never talking to each other, but flipping quarters for each round and generally coming out about even.

The sheriff and I were long out of Itkoochami County by now, the land around us rising up some as we left the lake country and the forests behind, and rolling out into the autumn-bleak prairies.

Arnie, he told me, was about twenty-eight or so, with a beard and a little bit of a gut and a not-too-bad but still noticeable backwoods-bachelor odor, when he got engaged to eighteen-year-old Kathy Meisner. This was about three weeks after Alice Oachs and Wayne Pederson announced their marriage plans, and Arnie was probably the only one in town who didn't draw the connection.

Wayne Pederson's family had been one of the first to settle up around Wingbeat, a fact which his mother was not afraid to mention to anyone who didn't already know it, and from time to time to those who did. They owned the grocery store and the gas station and the real-estate office and a fair amount of the better land on the east side of town. Wayne was having to give up a football scholarship, and those who knew him best said he wasn't real happy about it but they figured the month-long honeymoon in Hawaii his folks were giving them as a wedding present might take some of the sting out of it.

A collection went around that helped Arnie pay for a long honeymoon weekend in Minneapolis. It being the muddy season, Maynard only complained a little when Arnie and Kathy went and spent a week visiting his folks, but he did buy a couple of bottles of whiskey and went home and stayed there, and Floyd the mailman said what mail Maynard got was piling up but he was damned if he'd be the one to walk up to that house unarmed.

"So they sent me," the sheriff said. "But he was all right. Just drunk and philosophizing about the doom that befalleth any man fool enough to get married—and shooting up a few beer bottles for lack of anything better to do."

When Arnie returned, things pretty much got back to normal, the only difference being that Arnie took most of his meals at home, trimmed his beard, and didn't hardly smell at all. And then Alice and Wayne got back and the new sport in town was comparing Alice and Kathy's bellies and speculating.

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There was some said—and this was the majority opinion—that Wayne had got them both pregnant and chose Alice. Some said the two girls fought it out one Saturday night down behind the high school. Some said Wayne had chosen Alice, and Kathy had gone to Arnie for solace and/or revenge and it'd be Arnie's kid, after all. And some said Kathy had gone with Arnie to make Wayne jealous, and both had gone too far and got caught—and instead of being the sucker, less-than-handsome old Arnie had in some ways come out ahead.

As it happened, Alice Pederson gave birth first, to a girl, and Kathy Carlson two weeks later—to a boy. But nothing was really resolved, since Kathy was just as blonde and blue-eyed as both Wayne and her son and there were a lot of folks said the poor kid had Arnie's mouth, and the Pederson baby was the spitting image of her dark-haired mother. But the question being unanswered only meant that there'd be a handy bit of conversation laying around for slow evenings as folks watched the young Carlson boy grow out of his mushy child-face and take on the features that would proclaim his parentage.

Life bumbled on. Arnie went out to the woods with Maynard and Wayne spent his mornings working at the gas station, his afternoons out three-wheeling or fishing, and his evenings lifting a few weights at the high-school gym, then a few cold ones at the Thirsty Mosquito. Alice and Kathy would wheel their prams down to Sal's Cafe most mornings around ten and sit with the other women and talk about whoever wasn't there. Nettie Sandstrom noticed—and mentioned with great meaning in her voice when neither Kathy nor Alice was there—how Kathy never had a harsh word for anybody, how sour Alice was getting, and how no one ever knew where Wayne was in the afternoons—and often as not you didn't see Kathy, either. Nettie allowed as how there'd be more than one woman at the table who might smile a bit more if she had two big healthy men keeping her entertained. And so naturally, when both women got pregnant again, the speculation was renewed with vigor.

Again, the second Carlson baby resolved nothing, being dark-haired like Arnie and blue-eyed like Kathy. When Alice Pederson gave birth to another dark-haired, brown-eyed girl, Nettie said, "You don't suppose Arnie and Alice—?" But nobody ever really gave that idea much thought, and the way Arnie beamed and handed out the cigars they kept the thoughts they did have to themselves—or at

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least sufficiently veiled so that Arnie's unsuspicious mind remained at ease.

"You know," the sheriff said, "I don't really believe in fate, either—by and large, people do themselves in out of their own damned stupidity or laziness or whatever. You stick your hand in the fire enough times, sooner or later it's going to get burned. But, still—if that patch of ice hadn't been where it was or that post been five feet in either direction, they might have gone on for years."

They did manage to go on for a couple more. Doc Lindgren must have taken the two ladies aside at some point and explained birth control to them, because they both went two years without giving birth.

Alice Pederson was six months pregnant, though, when Wayne came running into the Mosquito late New Year's Eve, his face snow-white and his body twitching and shivering as he stuttered something about being out at a party at the Mergens' and his car being stolen. The sheriff drove out toward the Mergens' house, with Wayne moaning and mumbling in the passenger seat, and found Wayne's blue Camaro in a ditch embracing an electric pole—with Kathy Carlson on her back in the front seat, shirtless, her jeans open and shoved down a little on her hips, and her eyes iced over.

"She looked like a statue," the sheriff said. "A beautiful, cold marble statue." Without a mark on her, he thought, until he leaned over close and saw that beneath her thick blonde hair the back of her head was caved in.

"Arnie's mother had been ill and he'd gone to spend the holidays with his folks. He'd wanted Kathy to come along, but she'd begged off, saying the last thing his mother needed was two kids crying in the middle of the night—and, besides, she wasn't feeling well herself.

"Folks think he took it real stoiclike," the sheriff said. "Said he was in shock, said it was just a marriage of convenience, anyway. You know how people can be. But they don't know. They didn't hear the sound he made. I can't describe it—like a dying rabbit, but not quite. The first thing he said was it was his fault for leaving her when she didn't feel well. And then I had to tell him how she didn't just die, she was killed."

We were slowing down, turning off the main highway onto a gravel road running between flat grey fields. Ngaasted paused a moment, checked a map, sighed noisily, and we rolled on.

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Wayne had been drunk, and the DWI and Manslaughter stuck, but his family had been in the county since the beginning and his mother spoke eloquently about how they needed him to help with the gas station, how he was really a good boy and had two children to support. And, after all, it was an accident. Arnie refused to attend the hearings and the overworked prosecutor soon saw little to be gained by making too big an issue of the two children suddenly left motherless. So Wayne had only to pay a fine and spend nights and weekends in the county jail for six months, ironically enough *driving* from Bearwoods to Wingbeat every day to stand in the gas station and drink vodka-laced soda-pop and glare at anyone who looked at him crosswise.

Over at Sal's, some said it was a terrible thing—but an accident, and hadn't he been punished enough? Others said no, the arrogant bastard should have gotten at least ten years. And some were looking for Arnie to quit walking around with blank eyes and *do* something. Maynard was the only one who actually said anything like that out loud, but he went on about the case daily, starting out over breakfast by discussing the inequality of the rich and the poor before the law. Folks who'd been out to the logging site heard him orating on the duties and rights of a man to stand up for his ownself 'cause no one was going to do it for him, and there being only one law—that of the jungle and the Bible inborn in any real man. And over many a supper, Maynard would detail the most satisfactory way of killing a man who had outraged your home and family.

But it all seemed to wash over Arnie, who, if he was a little subdued, a little quieter, well, he'd never been the life of the party.

When he wasn't working, Arnie was usually home with his kids, so out-of-sight out-of-mind, life goes on, and there were other things to talk about besides Wayne finishing his sentence.

"So maybe," the sheriff said, "there was only me that wasn't surprised by what we found the other day. Though Maynard may have had some idea."

What they found was Wayne Pederson dead in a ditch, leaning up against a recently replaced electric pole, clutching in his hand a beat-up old picture of Kathy Carlson as a high-school graduate—with the words, smearily written in Wayne's own blood on the back, "Tell Arn thanx—just wish hadnt wait so long."

We turned off the road and followed a short driveway into a small but neatly kept farmyard. Arnie's truck was parked by the barn.

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"If you'd wait here a bit," the sheriff said and stepped heavily down out of the Blazer. He gave his belt a tug and lumbered up to the front door, knocked, and was admitted, leaving me wondering again why I was here.

It was about ten minutes later when the door opened and the sheriff came out carrying the deer rifle. Arnie came out behind him, then turned and bent down to say a few words to his kids, which I don't guess they were old enough to understand, and then he stood and came after the sheriff and I could see his father standing in the doorway, hitting the jamb with his fist—not hard, just tapping rhythmically, the way some people rock when they're unhappy.

I started to get out and get in back, but the sheriff waved at me to stay where I was. He let Arnie in the back and got in himself and we drove off, not saying much for a while. Then Arnie ventured that it was a bit nippy and the sheriff allowed that it was. We talked some more about the weather, then about fishing, then about Dolph Wilkerson's new bull and that fellow who shot himself in the foot last deer season. After a few years of that, we finally got back to Bearwoods and I went to get me something to eat while the sheriff took Arnie up to the jail and got started on the formalities.

It was well past dark when Emory picked me up and we started back toward Wingbeat. We rode silent for a while and then he stabbed viciously at the radio button and a country station came on. We listened to that for about thirty seconds before the sheriff fiddled with the dial, and we listened to some hush-voiced announcer extolling some conductor's talents and then there was some cheerful Bach filling the cab for a while. And then the sheriff shut that off, too, and there was only the hum of the tires on the pavement.

"You in a hurry?" he asked after a while. I said no, and so instead of going straight on into Wingbeat the sheriff turned off on the old Larson road and pretty soon we were pulling into Maynard Hutchins' machine-cluttered yard.

The sheriff got out, and without a trace of the heaviness that had afflicted him at Arnie's folks' place he marched up to the door and banged on it, hollering at Maynard to hurry up and open the damned door. Following along, I was close enough to smell the whiskey effluvium Maynard was putting out when he opened the door wide and said, "He ain't here, Sheriff. You can come in and look if you want."

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"I know he ain't here, Maynard," the sheriff said levelly. "I just come out here to tell you personal that I done arrested him."

"Well—that's kind of you, Sheriff."

"I also come to tell you I spent the last forty-eight hours thinkin' on it, but I can't figure no way to arrest you, too. Arnie insists you didn't have nothin' to do with it, so I guess you're gonna get away with it. But I just wanted you to know that I know and—"

"Sheriff," Maynard interrupted, "if I could do his time for him, don't you know I would and be glad to? Oh, I know you're thinkin' I talked him into it. You're thinkin' all the time out in the woods there I was pushin' at him till he had to go an' shoot one or the other of us. Well, you're right, Sheriff, I sure as hell tried. And I'll tell you this—even if he ain't a damned Pederson, he ain't gonna serve more'n ten years! And when he gets out, if he thinks I had anything to do with it he's gonna come here and thank me, because maybe he lost ten years but at least he ain't gonna have to spend the next fifty living in the same town or even on the same planet with the man that not only screwed his wife but killed her and left her for the world to come and gawk at. Believe me, and I *know*, Sheriff, that ain't no life for a man—no life at all."

The two of them stood there a moment looking at each other, Maynard swaying just a little but managing to keep his back straight, a glow of triumph on his flushed and weatherworn face. And then the sheriff reached into his back pocket and pulled out a piece of paper he held behind his back where Maynard couldn't see it and he said, "You never did find your wife, did you, Maynard?"

Maynard's face stiffened a little, but his voice was calm. "No, Sheriff, I never did. 'Cause if I did, it'd be me just gettin' outa stir now, wouldn't it?"

The sheriff nodded. "If you say so, Maynard." Then he held out the piece of paper and said, "This here's her address, Maynard. Folks ain't hard to find if you know how to look. They've got a kid now and Ray's got a half interest in a marina besides his real-estate office, so I guess they're doin' all right. Be seein' you around, Maynard."

He turned and walked back toward the Blazer, Maynard staring after him with shocked eyes, holding the paper in hands that slowly began to shake.

As we pulled out of the yard, I could see Maynard in the doorway, sagging a little to one side, and I said, "So you don't think he'll do it?"

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"No," Ngaasted said, "I don't think so."

We rode on into town and stopped outside Sal's darkened windows, where my car was parked, and I started to get out.

" 'Course that ain't her real address," the sheriff said. "She left Ray three years ago for some bus driver in Arizona."

"I see," I said.

He started the Blazer moving again, so I got on out and stepped toward my own vehicle. The sheriff made a U-turn and backed up beside me, cutting the motor and the lights so he could speak to me out of complete darkness.

"If I had my druthers, we'd stick Maynard in jail an' make Arnie marry Alice. But since that ain't possible, it seemed like a good idea—" For a moment, we sat thinking of Maynard alone out at his cabin, having to take a long hard look into himself with me and the sheriff peering over his shoulder while he chose between jail or eating all his fine words that had sent his friend Arnie into the slammer and killed Wayne Pederson.

The sheriff said suddenly, "You think I did the right thing, Writer? You think that's justice or just me adding another cycle of vengeance?"

I stared into the darkness where he sat and understood suddenly why he'd taken me along. First I thought he'd picked the wrong man—because I sure as hell didn't have an answer for him. Then I thought he'd probably picked the right person—because I knew there wasn't an answer for him. And finally I thought that maybe the answer one lonely man really wants from another is—what I gave him.

"I dunno, Sheriff. I guess we'll have to wait and see what happens, won't we?"

And he said, "Yeah, I guess we will."

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a *NEW* short story by

NELL LAMBURN

"Tis my hoam," *Arnold repeated, as if that very repetitiveness could make Colonel change his mind. "I were born here—Father were brought up here—tis my hoam."*

"And I'm giving you another home—a much better *one, Arnold. You're not getting any younger and this place is damp, inconvenient, isolated—"*

To finish up this issue, meet Arnold Greech, another man who—like the Black Widowers' guest in Isaac Asimov's story which began the issue—treasures quiet and solitude in this noisy, overpopulated, overmechanized world . . .

JACK'S PLACE

by NELL LAMBURN

Every night, just at dusk, Arnold Creech swung shut the great barred gate beyond the barns and turned to walk the quarter mile back to the cottage. And every night, before he reached there, he'd pause and stare about—at the sheep-cropped slopes that pressed down into the coombe, the ancient lynchets terracing Cow Down with their angled banks, the rough beech heads above Morley's Cleve—but he'd stare the longest at Great Wether. Like the low, smooth back of the sleeping sheep that had given it its name, the long barrow lay along the crest of Parson's Hill. Just as it had for five thousand years. Just as it would long after he was gone.

It comforted him, that continuity, as if time, stretching its arms forth and back, protected him in its immensity, and he'd walk contentedly on toward the soft yellow lights of the cottage. Sometimes the barn owl glided, so silent as to seem weightless, from its roost

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in the dying elm, to keep him pale company. Or a badger trotted, heavily intent, on its well worn path from sett to sett. Perhaps a vixen screamed, and there was a dog fox's barking answer. White-scutted rabbits scattering at his coming. They were his people, his world, until the morrow when he'd swing open the gate again and let in that other world.

He'd been born in this cottage, just as Colonel Sowerby had been born in Manor Farm. But he'd not traveled as Colonel had. Salisbury, Marlborough, Swindon—just once to Southampton. Absence would fret at him, rubbing him sore, like an ill-fitting saddle, until it was now three years since he'd ventured farther than the village a mile away. Grace liked to travel, though. So he'd accompany her the half mile to the bus stop on the main road, matching his step to her ponderous tread—or Mary, nervous of the unpaved track, would wait impatiently by the barns to drive her mother back to Swindon, the car awash with children.

Often now, she let young Martin stay with him and those were good days. Just for a few hours, while he went about the farm's business, he'd make believe that Jack was with him again. But a Jack who loved the land, who listened and watched and moved among the sheep so quietly that they never panicked themselves. A Jack whose angry eyes weren't set beyond the Downs, who never argued and quarreled and craved for speed and noise and crowds. Yet who'd loved his parents—yes, who'd laughingly told them so before, astride the monstrous machine, he'd strapped the great black helmet on and ridden off to do battle with the world. And lost that battle in a convulsion of metal and blood and bitter sorrow.

Grace never spoke of him now. He'd have liked to, but the last time she'd stared at him so terribly he'd never tried again. Just now and then, when the desire became too strong, he'd walk up to Great Wether and speak aloud, his hand on the crumpled sarsen boulder that blocked the entrance. It had been the only place that Jack had cared for in all the farm. ("Get up—get up, you silly old sheep!" he'd cry, baby legs splayed to ride its wide back. Or lie, his soft cheek against the softer grass, and croon gentle, unintelligible words, as if the barrow were indeed a living grey wether.)

When he grew older, Grace had hated him going up there. Morbid, she called it. Unnatural for a lad. So Jack had teased her with horrid tales of ghosts and ghouls and awful rites until the young Mary howled with fright and Jack was slapped by his mother's hard hand.

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"Why do it, lad?" Arnold Creech would sadly ask. "Thee'll know how 'til end."

But Jack could not explain the fiend that drove him on and his father could not form the words to comfort him. It was only up at Great Wether that they came close to understanding. Again and again Arnold would tell him the things his own father had told him: how those long-ago people had laid the bodies in open-sided mortuary houses until the bones were picked clean, then brought them to the stone-walled chambers of the tomb, each type of bone piled separately—every time closing the great boulder until, finally, there was no more room, or no more people. Then the turf, like scar tissue, formed and thickened over the centuries, sealing the tomb beneath its living weight.

The young Jack would listen, avid for details, demanding to see the photographs of the excavation which had taken place in his grandfather's time: men in cloth caps and collars and ties leaning on huge spades beside a trench; the two archeologists, peering with posed intent at a skull that one of them held, a casual jumble of bones beside them; Colonel Sowerby's father in his plus fours, Gent, his famous one-eyed deerhound, beside him; even Arnold in his own father's arms, staring squint at the camera.

The archeologists had not stayed overlong. Old General Sowerby had seen to that. He hadn't held with digging up the dead.

"Grave robbers! I won't have grave robbers here! You will replace those bones! In the tomb!" With a furious wave of his ivory-topped cane: "This is my land and you'll do as I damn well say or get out!"

Jack had liked that bit. But Jack was gone these thirteen years and no one much went up to Great Wether these days except himself and the sheep, and Colonel once a year.

He'd wanted to explain it all to young Martin, but Grace had forbade it and so, for peace sake, he'd picked at the subject, offering his grandson such savorless morsels that the boy had quite lost his appetite for knowledge. But maybe it was for the best. When Martin came to live with them and learn all there was to learn of shepherding, he'd weave his own bond with the land about him.

There was no electricity at the cottage, but then there was no need of it. Oil lamps gave them all the light they needed, there was wood and coal to warm and cook for them, and though, at Mary's insistence, he'd allowed the construction of an indoor lavatory, he'd refused the bathroom.

"You're unfair to Mum!" she'd hammered at him again and again

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with her new, flat, Swindon voice, her placid moon face—Grace's face—screwed up with anger. "Just 'cos *you* like living in the past, poor Mum, you're a wicked old man, that's what you are! She could have hot water an' a MagiMix an' a washing machine an' a new cooker an' a freezer an'—an' a *telly!*"

Town talk. Swindon talk. Arnold Creech would slippy-slide his eyes about until she ceased her railing, and if Grace's heavy body sagged a little more with the stillborn hope of such longed-for luxuries, he chose not to notice.

Once there'd been a barn and penning near the cottage, but they'd long since gone and now the turf covered their foundations as it had covered Great Wether and only nettles, thriving on disturbed ground, marked their outlines. But sometimes, even now, when digging in the long garden beside the cottage, he'd come across a scatter of broken brick and rake it aside in case, somewhere on the farm, a foundation needed to be laid. For Arnold Greech never threw anything away.

He'd picked up such a piece that late spring evening when he heard Colonel's Range Rover turn through the barnyard. He could not see it, but he knew because he could identify the engines of the different vehicles that came to the yard as well as he could the birdsong about him.

He waited, the fragment of brick coarse against his hardened palm—and seeing his motionless figure, Colonel Sowerby's stomach lurched and his foot jigged on the accelerator. He knew already—oh, Christ, he knew! Simon had told him—the little devil had sworn not to, but he must have told him!

But he was wrong. Arnold did not know. He stood utterly still, his head averted, staring intently up at Great Wether as if in not looking at Colonel's agitated face he need not hear the truly terrible things being said.

"Bound to be a bit of a shock, I know—thought I must tell you straight out. You see my predicament, though. It's the last chance, I know it is—" His voice sweated against Arnold Creech's silence. "Emma's a *marvelous* girl, first rate—she'll be the making of him. He's promised to settle down—swore it on the Bible and you can't get more serious than that. Put all that London nonsense behind him, turning over a new leaf—fresh start and all that. He's not a bad lad, he just doesn't think."

Still Arnold did not look at him. "Tis my hoam. Tis my *hoam.*"

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"I know, I know that. Don't think this has been an easy decision for me." Colonel Sowerby jerked his emblazoned signet ring about and about his little finger. "But if Simon doesn't settle now, God alone knows what will happen. He'll be twenty-five in June. He says he *wants* to farm. He's my only son, Arnold—if he throws it in now, there's no one else to take over. The girls won't marry farmers."

"'Tis my *hoam,*" Arnold Creech repeated, as if that very repetitiveness could make Colonel change his mind. "I were born here—Father were brought up here—tis my hoam."

"And I'm giving you another home—a much *better* one, Arnold. You're not getting any younger and this place is damp, inconvenient, isolated—"

"Master Simon'll not want it, then." It was a faint, hopeless thrust and Colonel Sowerby parried it at once, briskly.

"On the contrary, it's just the out-of-the-way place for newlyweds. We'll modernize, of course—electricity, proper plumbing. Needs a deal of things doing. I'd have done them years ago if you'd have let me, Arnold, you know that."

"Doan need a thing. Tis my hoam."

"And it's *my* cottage."

Oh, God, he hadn't meant to say that, he really hadn't. It was just that the man was so damned stubborn, he wouldn't *listen!*

"So tis, Colonel, so tis." The amalgam of mockery and bitterness mortared his words to the Colonel's conscience, so that he cried in aggressive, shamed defense.

"I've made my decision, Arnold! You won't make me change my mind!"

He hadn't meant to be like this. He'd meant to be understanding, paternalistic, reassuring. But it was happening, just as it did with Simon and the girls. Susan, too. His good intentions backed into a corner by his own inadequacy so that he defended himself by irritation and impatience. Just as he had with his soldiers.

"'Tis your cottage. Tis yourn to do as thee wants. I'll go tell the Missus. Her'll need a while to pack."

"For God's sake, Arnold, I'm not turning you out onto the streets! That place up the road is a palace compared to this!" His small mouth twitched agitatedly beneath the clipped grey thatch of his moustache. "And think of Grace! She can get on a bus just outside her door! She can have all those modern conveniences she's never had. I'll make sure she's got everything she wants."

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Arnold gazed at him then, briefly, but it was enough to deepen the high color on Colonel Sowerby's cheeks.

"I'll not take bribes, but thank'ee all the same."

Defeated, Colonel Sowerby turned away. He'd mismanaged it as he'd mismanaged most of his personal relationships and there was nothing he could do about it.

"All right, all right, have it your own way. But I think you'll find Grace will feel quite differently. She's worked damn hard all her life, she deserves something better than—than this *hovel.*" He sulked pettily. "You have no idea, Arnold, the number of times I've had to defend you—explain that you don't live in the past because of *me.* My friends find it very strange, you know, very strange indeed."

But Arnold wasn't listening. A terrible pain was darting through him, as a ferret darts unseen deep in a warren, snapping, tormenting for blood. Colonel did not understand. Colonel was not a cruel man, he just did not understand. His cottage was the heart of this coombe, and the coombe was his life—take him from it and he would die. His spirit, the essence of him, would die. Ah, yes, he would still close the gate at dusk, but now he would be outcast, banished. He'd be a stranger to his own safe, beloved world. And something akin to panic drenched him.

"Tis my hoam!" he cried in a final desperation, but Colonel Sowerby heard only the bleating cry of a thwarted old man and said, each statement another brick in the wall of his decision:

"Michaelmas Day. I want Simon here by the beginning of the farm year. Good clean professional start. I'll have New Cottage ready by July. That'll give us time to get this place up together. I'm not hurrying you, Arnold, you've got plenty of time to get used to the idea. You'll see it's for the best. You'll want to retire one day, you won't want to go on working all your life—leave more time for the grandchildren." His words oiled the harshness of his announcement, but Arnold said, dully,

"Martin'll come here. Martin's a good shepherd e'en now. Martin'll live with us."

Colonel Sowerby rolled back his shoulders, confidence returning.

"Oh, he's an excellent lad, I agree, I've been watching him, but he's only a youngster. He might change his mind, then you'd be stuck out here—no phone, be damned lonely."

Lonely? *Lonely?* With a terrible despair, Arnold Creech knew then that Colonel would never understand. For how could anyone be lonely here?

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"I mun close the gate. Tis time I closed the gate." He grasped, in that despair, at the familiar routine, as a man, plunging over a precipice, grabs at a lone bush to save him. And Colonel Sowerby, released from the impossible moment, exclaimed eagerly,

"I'll do it, Arnold! Save you the walk. I'll do the gate on my way out!"

But Arnold's stare blocked the obsequious words, dragging out the Colonel's pale, rooted fear of the man, shaking it like a terrier shakes a rat.

"*I* mun close it—tis mine to close."

"All right, all right, have it your own way." Colonel Sowerby tried not to hurry to the Range Rover, the terrier fear snapping at his heels. He slammed the door shut beside him, calling out, "Think over what I've said, Arnold! You'll see it makes sense—for everyone!"

But Arnold didn't answer. A pain, physical now, seared his left hand. He opened his clenched fist and the fragment of brick, ground to dust by the power of his distress, sprinkled onto the new-turned earth. He stared numbly down at it. Dried blood, that's what it looked like. The dried blood of some slaughtered beast. Or a broken heart.

Grace did not question it. Her heavy flesh packed his mother's honey-brown wheelback chair, her thick fingers extraordinarily quick and light about the knitting needles, as a heavy woman will dance with the step of an angel.

"Tis Colonel's cottage," she submitted, not looking at him, and his breath grunted out in shocked disbelief. He was betrayed! For in that unquestioning acceptance, she reached out for those false modern gods he knew now she indeed craved for!

"But tis our *hoam!*" He stared, bewildered, about the small crowded room and the past lay like sweet smoke about the cottage, filling his nostrils, his throat, his eyes, choking him with memories. He saw the maroon-velour cloth over the table where he'd done his schoolboy homework, the heavy oaken sideboard thick with the sentimental debris of two generations, the dear familiar gilt-framed scenes on the walls, the brass shell his father had brought from Mons, which, every Sunday, he'd polished—just as Jack had—the births, the deaths, the very marquetry of his life which patterned him as the man he was.

And Grace would forfeit it all for a brick box beyond the coombe!

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He shuddered. He could not bear it. He took his cap and jacket from behind the flanged door and went out into the night.

Grace Creech did not speak. She had failed him, she knew that, but she could not help it. She had failed him over Jack, too, over a grief which, had it been shared, might have lessened in that sharing. And she was failing him now. He was going to Great Wether. He was going to Jack. Her fingers stumbled, cramped by the bitter echoes of jealousy. For when Jack was born, he had quite gone from her.

She pressed the trembling needles flat into her lap, the blue jersey flooding her skirt. The radio, the great modern shiny one Mary had given her, glared silently, incongruously, with its enormous speaker-eyes. She could not manage it: it wasn't simple like her old one they'd thrown away. Strange music, strange voices leaped out at her touch, startling her, and Arnold would or could not help her. So there was no sound, no sound at all except for the clock, the occasional crumple of burning coal from the old black stove. And quickly, before the weight of the silence could suffocate her, she began to knit again.

But at New Cottage there would be sound! Cars, lorries, the Bests and the Graces across the lane, machines that would spring to her bidding at the touch of a switch—a telly, even, like Mary had! And lest the thinking drove the reality away, she snapped her mind shut against their sweet promise.

First born. Arnold Creech knelt in the cool damp grass and touched the tiny form, its fleece tight-packed with woolly, unfurled buds. Beside him the ewe stood, her emptied body disguised by her heavy wool, her dark hooded eyes watchful. His nostrils stung with that sharp smell particular to this moment and there was a restlessness, a ferment in the air that he never experienced at any other time. New life. How many times had it been reenacted here in this coombe? Sheep, cattle, people—maybe even strange beasts no modern man knew of that had wandered here when the Downs were young.

It wasn't a miracle, because miracles were rooted in mystery, but the coming of new life, any life, was the nearest to a miracle that he knew. And like an unwanted guest, the memory of Jack pressed its face against the bars of the past and the pain shot through him so violently that he doubled up, his hand to his side.

He'd knelt in the hospital, as he knelt now, when Jack was born after those four terrible, barren years, and he'd touched him as he

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now touched the lamb, his thick, stained finger huge against the infant form. The tiny black-haired head above the swaddling blanket, dark brows already frowning—

"Son—my son!" The words had sung silently within him, the first line of a paean of thanksgiving he believed would continue until he died. He had quite forgotten Grace, with her pleased pink face, her woolly white bedjacket and freshly combed hair, he had known triumphantly that, however many sons he had, Jack was special, Jack was *his*. He couldn't know then that there'd be no more sons. Only Mary. But Jack had been enough. And Jack was gone.

He held his breath, waiting for the pain to subside, watching the lamb, spurred by hunger, untangle its spindle legs to heave itself up. And from behind him, a voice cried mockingly, "I've brought the mint sauce, Arnold me lad! Who's going to carve?"

The words splintered the fragile moment with such crude violence that Arnold Creech's rage propelled him to his feet with the swiftness of a young man. And, seeing his face, Simon Sowerby backed away, hands up, apprehension fringing his light, derisive tone: "Come on, come on, I was only joking! Keep your hair on, Arnie!"

The pain of what-might-have-been drowned in Arnold's anger, not only at Simon Sowerby's crude words but that he had intruded on this private moment, had caught him, as it were, emotionally red-handed.

His shuddering breath rasped his nostrils. "What does thee want? Why be thee here?"

The sheep were milling uneasily, running and turning to stamp their delicate cloven hooves, and at once Arnold turned back, clicking his tongue gently against the roof of his mouth until they soothed.

"Father sent me." Simon Sowerby had vaulted back over the metal gate with an impudent ease and waited now, his hands shoved deep into the pockets of his Barbour, his fair straight hair falling across his forehead, the corner of his full mouth caught up in the shadow of a sneer.

Woman's face, Arnold thought bitterly. Twas a woman's face, pink and soft and weak.

"For why? Sent you for why?"

"To learn, Arnold, to sit at your feet and imbibe all your great knowledge! Crash course on agricultural wisdom, don't you know? I've promised the old man I'll settle down and cherish the bloody land for all those future Sowerbys he's so concerned about. This is

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Day One. 'Learn the lie of the land, Simon, get to know the land. You won't have a better teacher than Arnold—he knows every stick and stone.' So here I am!" He smiled with a charm that was highly polished with too much use. "The chariot awaits!" Extravagantly he gestured toward the scarlet Suzuki on the track below. "Emma's having a natter to your old woman. I wanted her to look the place over, get some idea of what needs to be done. You know what women are." He winked conspiratorially, man to superior man, but Arnold felt the glowing embers of his anger stir and flame. They had no right to pry into his home! No right to wear dead man's shoes afore he were cold in the grave. July, that's when Colonel said.

"Tis my hoam still." He turned slowly from latching the gate and Simon patted him paternalistically on the shoulder.

"Of course it is, of *course* it is, old chap, but it's going to be *my* home soon—seat of wedded bliss and all that, new leaf to be turned over—start the breeding program and keep Father happy." A bitterness burned the edges of his voice as the spring east wind burns the young ash leaves and Arnold resented it as bitterly. He was alive, wasn't he? Alive when Jack was dead. What more did he want?

He turned away up the track toward High Ground. "You'll not see the land unless on foot. Tis the only way."

Simon groaned exaggeratedly. "Oh, God, I *loathe* walking. Do we *have* to?" He pouted, childlike, and his blue eyes sulked dully. "Father won't know." But Arnold had moved on and there was nothing he could do but follow, scuffing his green wellington boots against the pale chalk track, closing his ears to the old man's low voice and his mind's eye to the land about him. And the weight of his indifference blanketed the morning, suffocating Arnold's joy in the new lamb's birth as surely as if, instead, it had been stillborn.

Until, at last, they came to Great Wether.

They skirted the small thicket of thorns and the long barrow lay before them, the spring grass like a fine new coat, striped darker where the long-ago trench had been and all about the base where once a ditch had ringed it. Arnold halted, unwilling to go nearer. This was his place, his and Jack's. He did not want Master Simon here with his bored, mocking indifference. He'd done what Colonel said, shown him the land. Now they'd best be gone.

But Simon cried, "My God, so *this* is Great Wether!" And sprinted across the field up onto the spine of the barrow, his face flushed from the long walk, his ill temper diverted as a child's will be. So that Arnold, in bitter reluctance, must follow him. "Would you be-

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lieve it, but I haven't been up here since I was a kid, Arnie me lad? I'd forgotten what a monster it is! It's *huge,* isn't it? Looks like a pimple from our house—a pimple on a great green bum!" And throwing back his head so that his fair hair flung like a blond mane, he laughed, shouting at his own wit.

Arnold didn't laugh. He stared up at the silhouette against the cloud-scudded sky and hated him. Hated him for his youth, for stealing his home, for desecrating this place—Jack's place—with his unthinking crudeness.

"Us'd best be gone." His voice shuddered with the weight of that loathing as muscles will shudder under too great a load. "I mun go back to lambs. I mun see to lambs."

But Simon had flung himself full length, peering over the end of the barrow, scrabbling the grass away between the lip and the sarsen boulder. "It's hollow, Arnie—I can see inside it! There's a sort of—sort of *room!* Quick, give me a hand, let's move the stone—"

"No!" Arnold moved away, an uneasiness, alien and aberrant to this special place, honing his voice sharp. "I mun see to lambs!"

But Simon had vaulted down to the entrance, tearing at the turf, setting his shoulder against the boulder. "Don't be such a *spoil*sport, Arnie! I want to see inside—"

I want. I want the farm, I want the Creech's cottage, I want to open Great Wether!

"Tis nothing but bones! Come away, Master Simon, let it be—" His voice clawed at him and Simon Sowerby stiffened, his head on one side, like a bird that detects its prey.

"I do believe you're frightened! I think you're scared of the place! Are there ghosts here, Arnie? Do the bones rattle at you in the night? Oh, how amusing! How killing! What a joke!"

"Tis a holy place, tis a graveyard." Arnold's voice began to rise. "Thee'd not open up a graveyard—"

"Why not? They're only old bones. Honestly, Arnie, move into the Twentieth Century, old chap. Ancestor worship went out a long time ago." Simon shoved a last time, unsuccessfully, against the boulder. "Do you know what? I reckon it'd be a *super* place for a party!"

Arnold's feet stumbled as his mind lurched and his hand shot out, grabbing at Simon's jacket.

"*No*—tis a holy place! Thee'd not have such a thing—tis wicked!"

But Simon shook off his grip with a sudden arrogant petulance. Stupid old man. Bloody stupid old man. God, what had he let himself in for, promising to farm this place, being nannied by this fool? "You

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can't do *this,* Master Simon—you can't do *that,* Master Simon—that's *naughty,* Master Simon!"

"Don't tell me what I can do or what I can't do, Arnold Creech!" All his frustration twisted out in a violent spiral of spite. "This happens to be *my* land, not yours! I can do what I bloody well want with it! I can turn the whole thing into a County Park if I want to! In fact, the way farming's going at the moment, it wouldn't be half a bad idea!"

Arnold stood still, staring fixedly across the coombe. Then he said, very low, the words strung taut, "They'd not let thee. Tis farming land."

"People don't *want* farmland, didn't you know? Don't you read your newspapers?" The spiral twisted to a lancet point, jabbing in revenge for the morning's lectures, the boring walk, his own unwanted future here. "No, of course you don't! Well, let me tell you, Arnold Creech, that I could open up the farm to the public, turn the barn into tearooms, give 'em guided tours of that long barrow—God, they'd love that! Dress you up as a true Wiltshire rustic. And the government would probably *pay* me to do it! So don't tell *me* what I can do or not do with my own farm!"

Arnold did not answer. Like an animal that has been hurt too violently, he withdrew into himself. His mind burrowed into itself so that he no longer heard nor saw the young man beside him. His home would be gone by July. Now they'd take his life's work from him, too.

On Simon Sowerby's twenty-fifth birthday, there was a blue-striped marquee on Manor Farm lawn and a group from London. There was champagne and barrels of transluscent, topaz beer, plump pink hams and pale poultry, marbled beef and great bowls of salads that glowed and glistened like a Maharajah's jewels, lakes of rich chocolate mousse and gaudy trifles, crusty Stiltons and the golden panoply of the English county cheeses. There was music and color and laughter—but, most of all, there were people.

Arnold Creech had never seen so many people, not in so small an area, not even on Master Simon's twenty-first birthday, and there'd been enough then. It was as if Colonel were trying to insure his son's intentions by a surfeit of witnesses, and the entrapped air was almost tangible with the smell of food and perfumes and too many hot bodies in too small a space.

Arnold Creech sat on the hard little gilt chair, feeling the pull of

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his best suit uncomfortable across his thighs, his feet complaining in the confines of his narrow shoes, and held hard to the comforting familiarity of his beer mug as if that could anchor him safe in the maelstrom of noise.

And at the center, at the eye of this storm, was Simon Sowerby, flushed, frenetic, half drunk, like a man taking leave of his friends on the eve of battle, the girl Emma clinging constant at his side.

"She's nice, Miss Emma is," Grace had said smugly, but Arnold thought her a fool, and a nice fool was as foolish as a nasty one. But there were women who liked it that way and he'd thought, the first time he'd ever set eyes on her, she had the smell of martyrs about her.

Grace was enjoying herself, he could see that. She sat with Mrs. Best and Mrs. Grace from Farm Cottages, her feet, oozing from her tight white sandals, tapping to the thudding drumbeats, her rouged cheeks flushed with the excitement of it all, and the unaccustomed champagne. They were all there, every one of them who worked on Manor Farm—even Mary had been invited, but the youngest had the measles and she hadn't come. It didn't matter. She'd not have understood. She'd have called him "spoilsport" and "old misery," she'd have chastised him for his silence because she'd not see, as no one else could see, that this was his wake, his funeral feast, as well as Master Simon's birthday.

Two weeks and he'd leave the cottage for the last time. New Cottage was almost ready, Grace had told him that. She walked there every day, with the eagerness, he thought bitterly, with which she'd once come to meet him. She didn't tell him so, but he'd watched her from the coombe side, jealousy and betrayal a nodule of pain in his stomach. He'd found the curtain patterns, the samples of carpeting, the kitchen catalogues where she'd hidden them and the pain had bared his teeth as if they had been letters from a lover.

He stared at her now, giggling with the women, as if she were a silly girl, and a slow resentment burned in him. She never chattered to him any more, never even talked much. It seemed she'd gone from him when Jack had died.

Jack. The pain, striking always when he least expected it, drenched him in aloes, freezing him in the marquee's airless heat. But Jack would have reveled in tonight: the noise, the gyrating people, the music, the zest for life. This was Jack's world. This and Great Wether.

From across the room, Colonel Sowerby hazily glimpsed his re-

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sentful face and cursed him inwardly. Raven on a gilt perch, Jonah, death's head at the feast! And knew it was his own conscience crying out, and cursed Arnold again because he did not want to deserve that guilt. For what else could he have done?

When they returned home at midnight, Arnold could not sleep. He sat by the window, browed with thatch, the low room loud with Grace's snores and the sharp ticking of the old alarm clock, and it seemed that the noise from the party had chased him back to the coombe, swaying and jostling and gyrating like a gaudy Chinese dragon of sound. His head ached from it, his nostrils clogged with the thick, sweet smells of food and too many hot pressed bodies. Even the sight of Great Wether clear-cut against the starred sky could not soothe him.

Yet, surely, up there he'd escape the throbbing, insistent noise in his head. Up there would be peace. He could cleanse himself in the silence. Anticipation stirred through him. It was a long while, after all, since he'd watched the dawn from Great Wether.

His bare feet pressed against the silkiness of the elm floorboards as he heaved himself a little stiffly on the wooden chair arms.

And as he did so, the noise of two engines broke upon the valley like a wave. He thrust the squat leaded window wider, but even before he glimpsed them, before he heard the shouting young voices, he knew what they were. The Range Rover and that scarlet Suzuki. Knew, too, where they were heading.

"*It'd be a* super *place for a party*!" Simon's light voice floated mockingly back to him.

They were going up to Great Wether!

No! No, they mustn't! Arnold spun clumsily to find his trousers, knocking against the chair, and Grace, wrenched from her sleep, struggled up onto one leathery elbow.

"I mun go—I mun stop 'em—tis holy place!" he cried out in his shock. And Grace answered thickly,

"Tis Colonel's land! Colonel can do what he wants. Tis Master Simon's land!"

"Not Great Wether! Tis holy place!"

She sat bolt upright then. "Tis *Jack's* place! That's what you mean, Arnold! Tis our Jack's place—that's why you don't want 'em there!" Once spoken, it seemed she could not stop his name, as if thirteen years of crying it in her heart were flooding into these few moments. Arnold could only stare, rooted to the spot, across the dim room, at

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the rough, sandy-grey halo of uncurlered hair, her heavy flesh easing from her pink nightdress, her eyes white-ringed with passion.

"Jack's *dead*—Jack's gone—Jack's dead just as those bones up there are dead! Jack don't care—Jack's never coming back—never, never, never!" Her voice skidded upward, uncontrollably, breaking on the razor edge of the final, terrible accepted truth. And Arnold, stirred by some long-forgotten tenderness and by his own loss, stumbled to the bed and clasped his hands about her shaking ones.

"There—doan 'ee cry. There—there—" Helpless, he stroked awkwardly the surprising softness of her forearm and violently she twisted her roughened fingers to entwine them in his, as if they were the only anchor in this tumult of grief.

How long they sat he didn't know, the faint sound of laughter, voices, drifting, mocking them, from the crest of Parson's Hill, the room wreathed in Grace's keening.

Until suddenly there came another sound, a sound they'd not heard for thirteen long years. They stared, frozen, at each other, their mouths slack, trembling, incredulous. Then, silence. A vortex of silence sucking in terror, shock, and disbelief. Before the screams began.

Arnold took the shortcut up through Morley's Cleve, the amber light from the old hurricane lamp pooling the ground unevenly before him, so that the vehicles didn't pass him in their headlong flight back down the track. He climbed fast but not too fast, and his legs, practiced in the hills, carried him with ease, so that it wasn't exhaustion that thumped his heart and tightened his throat as he crested the hill.

The boulder had been levered aside from the barrow entrance and faint light from some sort of torch glowed from the inner chamber. Bottles strewed, overturned, and the sharp smell of alcohol soured the cool air. And on the spine of Great Wether, just where Master Simon had taunted him those weeks ago, a twisted, crumpled form lay motionless, face down in the damp grass—and beside it, rocking, wailing, crouched the girl, Emma.

Slowly, he moved to the far, low end of the barrow, holding his lantern high to toss the light about, but the girl didn't pause in her lament. He could see no tire-tracks through the high spring grass, for there was no gate anywhere near Great Wether—they'd have had to stop on the track a hundred yards away or more and climb through the wire.

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But what he did see, when he swung the lantern lower, was a single track that began on the very barrow itself, swathing through the grass, biting into the earth, and all about Simon Sowerby's broken form the ugly, dark marks of skidding tires. Then nothing more. As feverishly as he searched, Arnold could see nothing more. The track, it seemed, had vanished into thin air. An air that was brushed with a faint, familiar, acrid smell. He stood trembling, the lantern agitated at his side, and Emma gibbered, "Someone called him, shouted his name. We were all inside. He came up—there was a terrible engine—"

A motorbike engine! The one he and Grace had heard back down in the cottage. A huge, powerful motorbike—just like the one Jack used to ride!

So. There, on Great Wether, Arnold Creech took a breath that seemed to reach deep into his very soul, and a peace, a contentment, began to ease through him, stilling the trembling agitation. A calm he hadn't felt since that evening Colonel had told him Master Simon insisted on taking his cottage. Only now they'd not have to leave. Ever. For Jack had made sure of that.

He turned to look far down at the single, glowing cottage light, and it was as if a suffocating darkness had been lifted from him. Young Martin would come to live with them and he'd teach him all he knew. Grace might weep for those new-fangled gadgets, for the switches and the telly and the neighbors. But she'd forget, she'd soon forget. He remembered her clinging fingers, her crying out of Jack's name, their bereavement acknowledged between them at last. Maybe, here in the solitude of the coombe, they'd find something sweeter than the comforts of New Cottage.

And maybe, too, at last, their Jack would be free.

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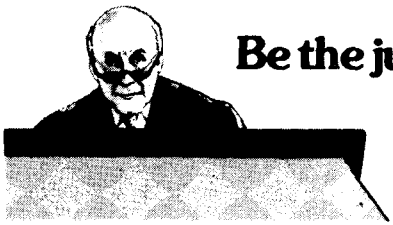

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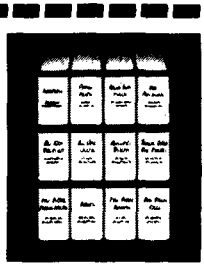

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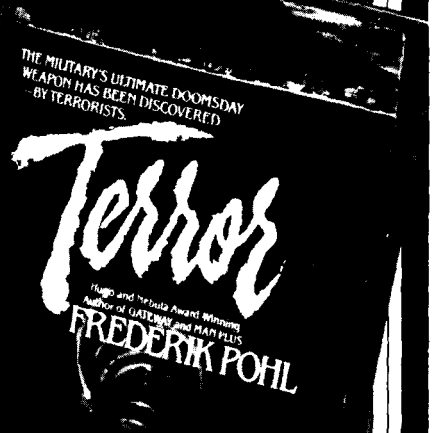
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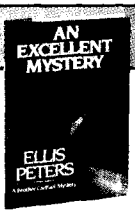

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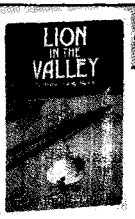

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